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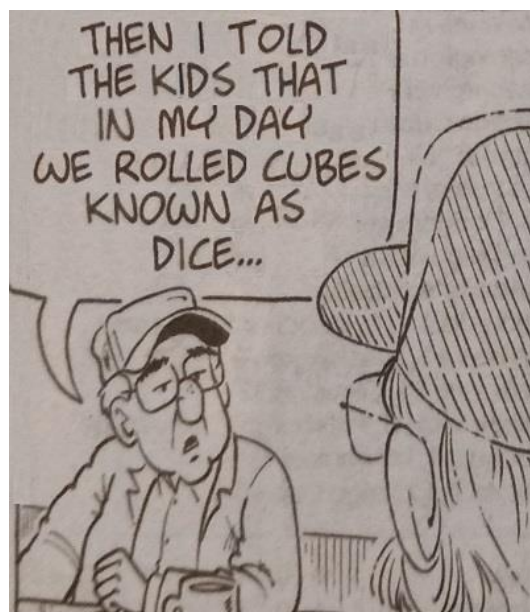
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# 1809 Bavaria: *Snappy Nappy* SnapCon IX

by Russ Lockwood

Another year and another multi-table, multi-player *Snappy Nappy* Campaign-In-A-Day extravaganza put on by the Connecticut gaming group at The Portal in Manchester, CT. On October 14, 2023, the game store graciously allowed us the run of the back room with its multitude of tables.

For the record, I created *Snappy Nappy* and the Napoleonic rules are published by On Military Matters and also carried by Caliver Books in the UK and other FLGSs.

Peter, with help from James and Mark, set up 15 4x6-foot tables representing 1809 Bavaria, roughly the area from Ratisbon (Regensburg) to Landshut and from Ingolstadt to Landau. Each stand represented 1500 infantry, 600 cavalry, or 18 artillery guns.

Yes, that's the big scale of *Snappy Nappy* used in Campaign In A Day games. All players are playing in the same game, but quite often on different tables, so there is usually considerable movement until forces collide and battle is joined -- usually across multiple tables. The "campaign" concludes in one day's worth of gaming.

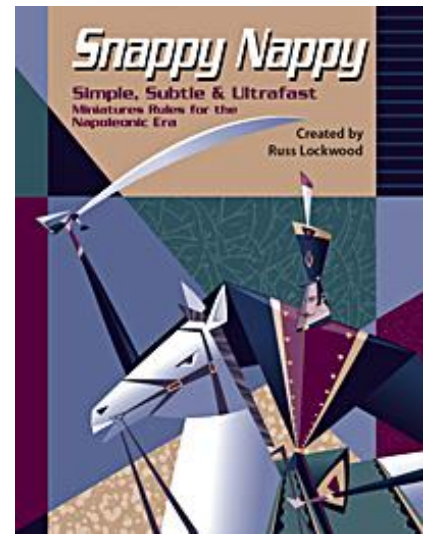
The key to keeping the game moving is that each table follows the Turn Sequence independently of other tables. If a player's troops leave the table via a road/deployment zone, the umpire escorts the player and his troops to the next table. These new troops adopt the turn sequence of the new table.

*The calm before the storm – so many tables that one shot couldn't fit them all in. This is the back room of The Portal. Photo by Peter.*

For fog of war, the "next" table is usually not the next physical table over, but across the room. Furthermore, table orientations (North, South, East, and West) are spun by table. Hence, North on one table might face the door, on another the window, on a third the wall, and so on. You'll know who is on your side, but at least at the start, not how your table connects to any given table. That all helps with fog of war.

The d10 rules are straightforward for firing, movement, morale, and so on. It all goes pretty quick and can be easily learned, although manipulating the units offers a bit of subtlety at times. Communications among players at the same table is allowed, although if you want to send a message to another player or the C-in-C at a different table, a written message goes through the umpire, who delays delivery depending on how many tables away the recipient is.

*We all head to the central table to pick up our badges.*





## Commands and Special Scenario Rules

Veteran *Snappy Nappy (SN)* umpire Peter offered both sides some options:

*The French players prepare for battle.*

### French Commands:

Napoleon I: Jim C. - Start: Ingolstadt  
II Corps: Steve T. - Start: Au  
III Corps: Mike S. - Start: Regensburg  
III Corps: Kevin C. - Start: Regensburg  
IV Corps: Sean S. - Start: Pfaffenhofen  
IV Corps: James S. - Start: Pfaffenhofen  
VII Corps: Karl N. - Start: Neustadt  
Wurttemberg Corps: Steven C. - Start: Ingolstadt  
Ad-hoc Corps: Mark M. - Start: Vohburg

### French Options

Note that none of these are guaranteed to succeed, and the attempt may result in some changes to the Austrian side as well! The French may choose one (or none) of the following options:

- 1) Napoleon arrives in the theater earlier
- 2) Davout's march on his own initiative towards Feking is not countermanded by Berthier
- 3) The Imperial Guard arrives earlier. Historically, they arrived after this phase of the campaign was over; if this succeeds they will show up fairly late in the day.

### Austrian Commands:

Feldmarschal Erzherzog Karl: Brian C. - Start: Rohr  
1 Armeekorps: Rob P. - Start: Bohemia  
3 Armeekorps: B.G. Smith - Start: Rohr  
4 Armeekorps: Brandon S. - Start: Langquaid  
5 Armeekorps: Alex O. - Start: Halfway between Pfaffenhofen and Siegendorf  
6 Armeekorps: Russ L. - Start: Mooseburg  
1st Reservekorps: Frank N. - Start: Pfeffenhausen  
2nd Reservekorps: Brian C. - Start: Landshut

*The Austrian players prepare for battle.*

### Austrian Options:

Change the Axis of Attack  
Attack Earlier  
Attack Later



Starting forces and reinforcements would change depending on which option was chosen.



## Austrian 6 Corps

As you can see from the list of commands, I was assigned 6 Corp by Archduke Charles. My command consisted of 18 units: four foot artillery units, one horse artillery unit, three cavalry units, and seven infantry units. Morale quality was quite good, mostly Veterans -- good for offense and defense -- and a couple of lower-rated Seasoned and Conscript troops.

*The 6th Corps in the case...*

As for my tabletop commander, I was "Dashing" -- not quite up to snuff with "Genius" Napoleon and Davout, but better than your average commander. I started in and around Moosburg.

## The Moosburg Migration

Archduke Charles ordered me to Freising, so I dutifully headed west along the Isar river to the town. I was to guard the flank and if possible push a little northwards towards Pfaffenhofen and Au. If nothing else, that would scout out a possible route by the French.

*...And deployed around Moosburg, ready to march off the table.*

It's a good thing Archduke Charles decided to move early, for I bounded into the Freising without a problem and started to send cavalry up the northern roads.

*My 6th Corp enters the Freising table (from the right) as three French columns also enter the table (from the top of photo). The Isar River is along bottom of photo. Freising is at the crossroads. The white chip denotes Austrian possession.*

That's when three French columns entered on the three northern roads. I immediately halted any northern movement and began to form a defensive line in and around Freising.

*Hey, that's me! I'm writing a note to the C-in-C about the initial French troops at Freising. More French would arrive in a minute, prompting a second message.*

## Better Living Through Firepower

I had to do my share of tactical noodling when confronted on Turn 2





by three columns of French troops under James, Steve, and Sean. Taking on 1:3 odds is never a good idea, so I needed to maximize use of terrain. I also figured they contained quality troops equal or better than mine.

Fortunately, I had five batteries of artillery: one of heavy 12lbbers, one of light 4lber horseguns, and the other three of medium 6lbbers. Actually, looking over my OB to compile these memoirs, I found that the horse battery was actually composed of medium 6lbbers. I shorted myself a die every time it fired. The fog of war sometimes intrudes on what a commander should know!

Unfortunately, my horse guns were at a great place for marching north and a wrong place for helping the defense of the town. With James bearing down on me, I had no time for the perfect line, but enough time for the line I created from the town back down the road.

*The start of Turn 3 finds three French commanders leading troops onto the Freising table: Sean (left), James (center), and Steve (right) enter the Freising table. The 8.5x11-inch map shows how close the French are to my flank.*



On my right, across a stream and a couple hills, Steve showed up. This was near my entry spot to the table, so I was able to quickly turn a few units right and set up a line with a ridge shielding me from any of Steve's cannons.

Sean on my left had the farthest to advance, so I had some time to shove a few units, including my cavalry, behind Freising while I marched a couple infantry and artillery units to bend the line back to the Isar.

That left James in the center, who was rapidly deploying to get across the intervening stream.

*I prepare a reception for Steve's French cavalry should they want to test their fate by crossing the river, but I am scrambling to put together a defense.*

I was set up in a fishhook with the long side from Freising to entry point and the short side curling from the town to the Isar River.

I was stretched pretty taut with minimal reserves -- call it the long thin white line...



## French Deliberation

Here, the three French commanders paused as they secured their side of the stream and the bridge crossings. The French idea was to coordinate all three commands in one big attack rather than go in piecemeal. Cursed smart French players!

The flip side is that I would be able to hold Freising and the left flank for many turns if the dice odds remained reasonably odds-like. I was banking on the five artillery batteries to help blunt the French attack.

I left a cavalry regiment to cover the center bridge, but James easily swatted it away. I sent an infantry unit to face the bridge. French cannon took care of them, too. It bought time for me to shift units to the once empty short side.



So on the French came, shaking out into a line to cover the long side of my line, while Sean came on with a flanking force to push in the short side.

*It takes a couple turns, but I shake out my defensive 'fishhook' line. I still have a couple units out of position, but they are moving as fast as they can.*

I could not have Sean's flanking force near me yet, so I rode out with a repositioned cavalry unit and charged the end of Sean's line. He made the roll for hasty square and bounced my cavalry backwards with casualties. No worries. I had another cavalry unit or two on that flank. But that sacrifice slowed his flanking movement to a crawl.

The exchange of artillery fire fell in my favor, in part because I had the heavy battery assisting the medium battery. I'm still eyeing the long odds against me, but help arrived and I started to advance from the short side.

*Austrian 5th Corp arrives (right), prompting me to execute a dangerous withdrawal in the face of the French. It looks as chaotic as it was, but we shuffled along.*

## The Long Thin White Line Thickens

About this time, Austrian Alex and his 5th Corp arrived on the battlefield. Well, well, well. Now it's 2:3, and better yet, because of the size of an Austrian Corps, it's more like parity.

Opposite Alex, Steve also sent away part of his French command, the cavalry, I believe, but there was a ridge in between us, so I'm not sure.

Anyway, now we could start expanding a bit -- starting with forward movement on the short side.

*Alex (left) arrives a tad before Steve (right). James (center left) and Steve (center right) press forward.*





Next decision -- how to layer in Alex's corp? It was either pass him behind me or slot him in next to me. It is always better to keep your command concentrated, so my lads had to pull back and his lads stuck in on our right flank.

This is not an easy maneuver to pull off in a historical battle. It is just as difficult to pull this off on a tabletop in *Snappy Nappy*. The danger from a French rush to attack is real, so you need a little finesse, right?

The resulting effort to pull back my troops definitely produced a maelstrom of confusion! I remarked that this would look as awful as an uncoordinated marching band at a Super Bowl halftime show!

Fortunately, Steve was far enough away that the deductions for about facing and moving slowly meant I was able to complete the transition without a problem from the French.

Also about this time, another French Steve showed up with his force. Oh great, just when we Austrians have parity, the French toss in another corp, so now it's 2:4, but more like 2:3 in actual stands. From my perspective, I also now had two artillery and three infantry units in reserve to plug any holes. Alex's full corp occupied basically half my original thin white line. We can definitely hold this place.

I thought I saw Napoleon himself make an appearance behind Steve on the ridge. If so, he was gone in a flash.

*The French push forward as Alex stands firm and I start to shift more and more units to face Sean's troops (bottom left).*

## The Big French Push

On came James, Steve, and Steve, but Alex and I were ready. James came through the woods to avoid any artillery fire and Steve came over the ridge with Steve close behind. Sean took a look at the artillery and cavalry and decided to screen my short side force. Oh, I inched out here and there, but the short side was definitely more on defense than offense.

James stalemated in the woods, but tore away a support unit of mine next to the woods while losing one of his own.

*James is pushing through the woods while crossing the bridge. Sean repelled my cavalry (bottom middle with casualty rings), but I'm starting to win the artillery duel and reserves are coming fast.*

Steve sent his French conscripts straight into the teeth of Alex's artillery and infantry line. It was a magnificent charge,





but left the quartet of units badly shot up and our Austrian line intact.

Until I could move some reserves to the short side, Sean and I stared at each other and traded some long-range cannon fire.

## Impossible Orders

I had been on that Freising table all day, dazzling the French with the Austrian two-step: the first step was to create a line and the second step was to polish all the cannon barrels. What I didn't know was what was going on in the rest of the campaign. When you separate players on different tables, you have to trust the C-in-C to keep your flanks and supply lines open.

*Steve's French conscripts come over the ridge and charge Alex's Austrian line. It is not a success.*



At one point in time, just as the French were forming up to attack and before Alex arrived, I received a message from Archduke Charles to abandon Freising and pull back to Moosburg.

I wrote back that such a maneuver was impossible. I'd lose half my corp trying to disengage from the fight and retreat down the road.

I was able to ignore the order because CT games do not use the "Orders" hierarchy in the *SN* rules. The idea is that you can obey or disobey orders because you're the player so you make the call and let the post-game discussions hash out any tabletop repercussions.

The "Orders" hierarchy is there to represent 19th century social mores of military authority. It's not perfect, and players can use the order given or the orders above or below on the ladder of hierarchy depending on national characteristics. Technically, if using Orders, Archduke Charles gave me a Maneuver Order. As the Austrians can go up or down one order level, I would convert that to the Defend order.

Since we weren't using Orders, I elected to stay, pinned as it was in combat.

I also knew, based on a previous *SN* C-in-a-Day game (1809 Italy) that I lost half my corp when ordered to do just about the same thing. Retreating in the face of an enemy is difficult. I suppose Archduke Charles could've ordered Alex and 5th Corp to hold Moosburg instead of helping me in Freiburg, but since I didn't have the C-in-C's information, I can't make the call. That's the beauty of the game: fog of war from playing on separate tables.

## Austrian Surrender

Elsewhere in Bavaria, the French were able to bring two or more corps against a single Austrian corp, squash it, and rinse and repeat. Something about Napoleon on three tables and three battles won?

The French drove up the middle and captured Landshut, or at least put the Austrians in such an impossible position, Archduke Charles asked for a parley to discuss terms.

## Full Recap

The full story will unfold on Peter's *Blunders on the Danube* blog, which has a special *Snappy Nappy* section. Full table maps, campaign map, GM map, OOBs, and recaps from players will be there. The QRS is also available for download.



Another great *SN* outing for me, with tactical challenges appearing literally on Turn 2. Better yet, I laughed the whole game through with fellow gamers and that's a great day of gaming.

Thanks, all, for making the trip to game. And thanks to The Portal for making the space available to us. If you are ever in Manchester, CT, stop by the well-stocked Hillard Ave store.

Thanks to Mark for the donuts, coffee, and pizza. And a special thanks to Peter, Mark, and James for putting another great scenario and campaign in a day.

## **Austrian Archduke Charles: Lessons**

*by Brian*

We were stomped at *Snappy Nappy*. My situational awareness collapsed Saturday. I bear full blame for this disaster. I believe I made two critical errors.

First, I elected for the early launch. The one turn extra move that it gave us was of no help at all, and I think that choice caused our forces to be weaker than would otherwise be the case. Pete, let me know if I am wrong.

Second, I thought that by staying at one location, messages could get to me more quickly. Once again, looking at how the game played, I think I was wrong. Jim (Napoleon) was constantly moving around the battle area, and he had a much better appreciation for the situation than I did. As a result, we were destroyed in detail.

*It is not easy to be C-in-C, balancing where each player's force is ... or will be ... or is supposed to be ... versus grabbing objectives while fending off the enemy. Much depends upon communications.*

*Being able to bounce all around the tables is a distinct advantage. Napoleon bounced all over. The rule was that you could move to a new table, take a look, and immediately return to the old table. That's probably more information and less fog of war than a C-in-C should have in an age of couriers. -- RL*

*I thought the early attack was the best Austrian option myself, and when I saw the situation at Regensburg, I thought, "Mon Dieu, the French are in real trouble." Then an Austrian Corps got caught in a "croque monsieur," and suffered heavy losses trying to extricate itself.*

*However, the Austrians were unable to quite exploit the situation at Regensburg in time to impact the French advance up the center. Hiller's Corps (Russ) down by Mooseburg probably could have held off the French all day on its own, with the Ludwig Austrian Corps (Alex) that arrived there being perhaps better employed elsewhere. Hindsight is easy. Command in real time? Not so much! That's the real beauty of these events, right? -- Peter (GM)*

## **An Austrian Accolade**

*By Rob*

Bellegarde and I had a good time being a pest to Davout with and without bridges! *Snappy Nappy*, I have come to appreciate, has a knack for delivering probable outcomes to player choices and actions in historical context and scale. This is necessary for much fun, dry humor, and the utter destruction of the enemy, is it not?

As a *Snappy Nappy* Bulletin might read: "Bonne position! Bonnes dispositions! Bon homme!"

I look forward to the next...

*Thanks for your kind words. Read all about this C-in-a-D and others on Blunders on the Danube blog.--RL*

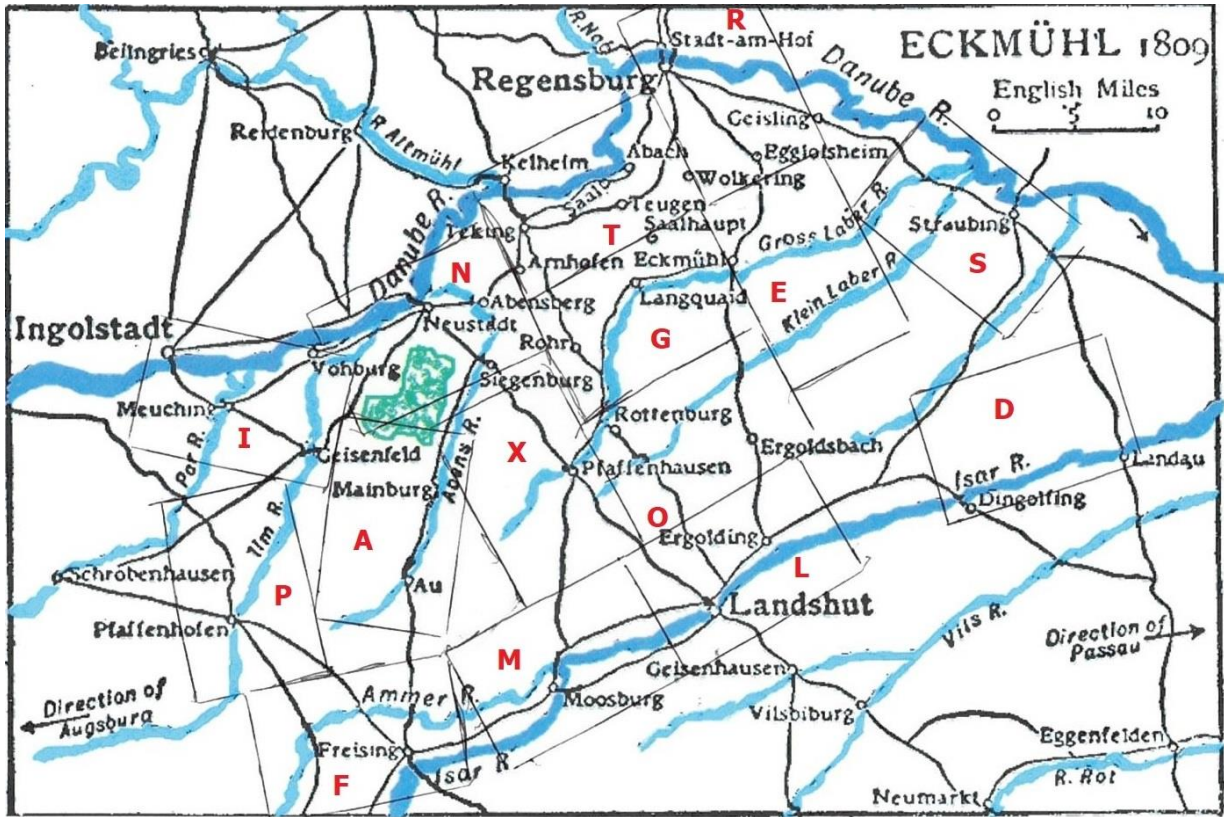
## **A GM Thank You**

*By Peter*

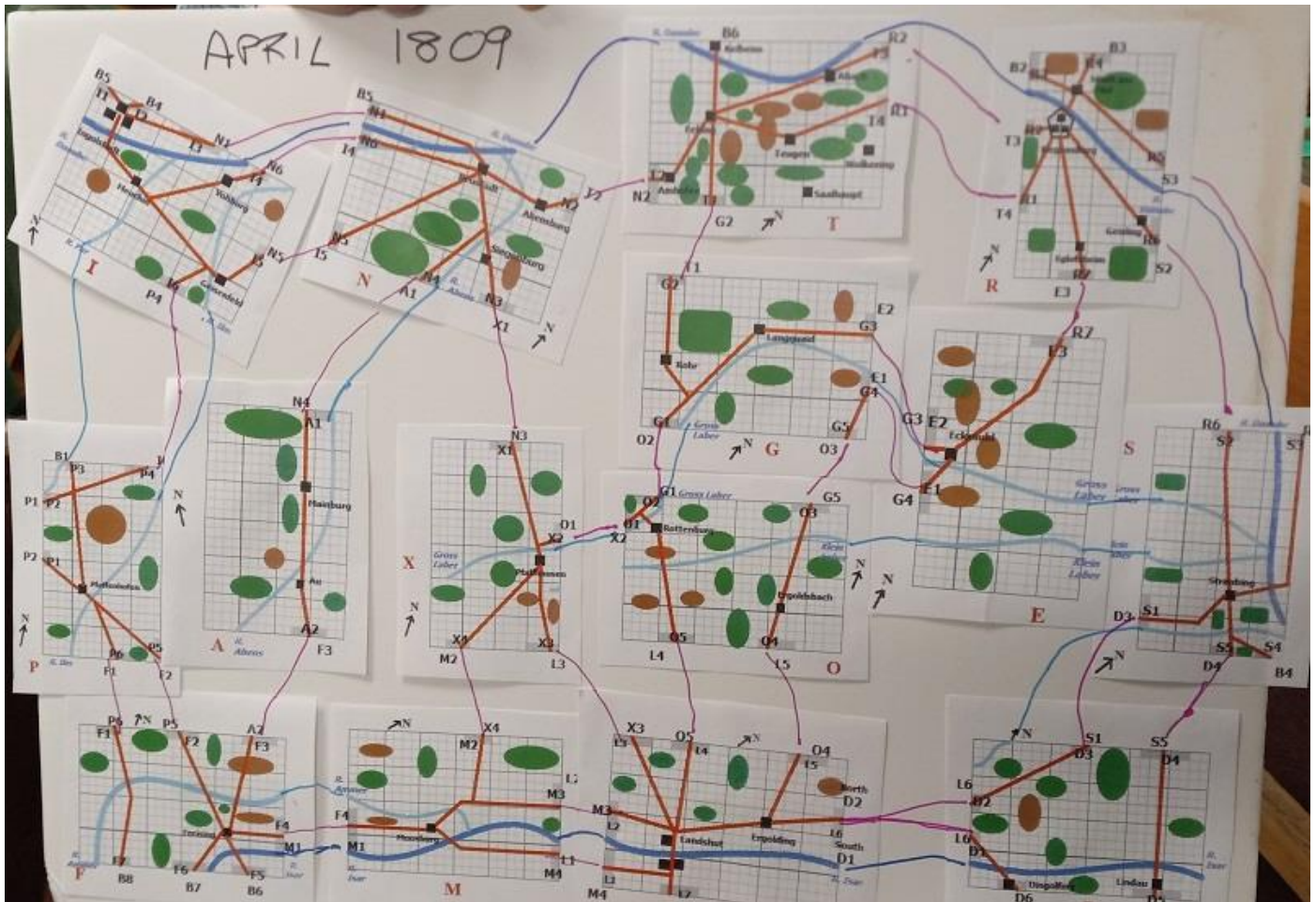
Thank you all so much for playing, and of course for the irreplaceable assistance of Mark and James, without which doing one of these huge events would be impossible! I know both Mark and I were wiped out (But happy) after packing everything up. Many of you drove a considerable distance to participate, which we greatly appreciate as well.

It was great to see many of you chatting about the event and whatever else after the event, and also a huge thanks for everyone's help packing up the troops, sorting out the terrain, etc. It usually takes me a time afterwards to put it all back in place. Unloading it from my car is my next task. I was far too tired (and sore) to tackle it tonight!





Top: GM Map – The campaign divided into tables. Bottom: How the tables interconnected.





# EuroGame-A-Palooza: Steve's Game Day

by Russ Lockwood

Each year, Steve hosts a Game Day that brings together about a dozen or 15 of us gaming buddies together. It's all euro-style card and boardgames and filled with the easy comraderie of gamers, even if we've only met that day.

This year was no different. No miniatures or board wargames, just the mechanics-based eurogames.

When I say eurogames, I mean those type of games that have some sort of pasted-on veneer of a subject that has nothing to do with reality, just the game mechanics.

Whether the game is good or bad, that's a personal preference. The key is trying to figure out the gimmick of the mechanics. I don't guarantee that more advanced rules insert more advanced use of the theme, only that you can pretty much substitute most any topical veneer into eurogame mechanics.

In order that I played:

## Scout: The Card Game

This has the thinnest, most inapplicable veneer I've run into yet. It's called *Scout*, so I'm thinking army recon -- maybe modern, maybe Old West?

No.

Something about Tonto's horse?

No.

Maybe it has to do with the Boy Scouts or the Girl Scouts?

Nope.

So, what is it?

Circus.

Eh?

Yup. Each card has a person's name and a tiny clipart icon that have nothing to do with the mechanics. It's like they didn't even bother trying, or, someone joked, the game needed a theme for marketing.

Anyway, you get dealt 10 cards, each with a number (from 1 to 10) on opposite ends of the card. When you pick up your cards, you never rearrange the order. "Play with the hand you're dealt," noted GM Scott.

*My first hand.*

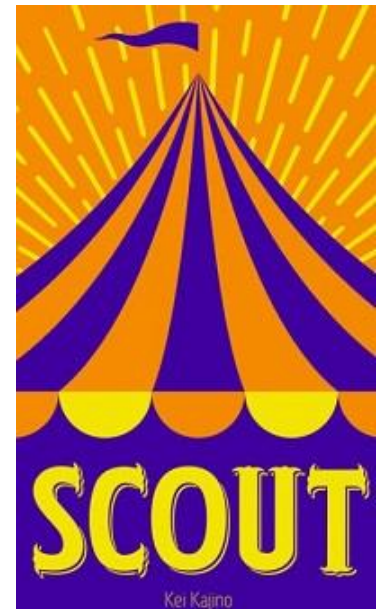
You can flip your entire hand upside down and use the other numbers, but you can't rearrange them, either.

*Scout* plays like a Poker-based trick-taking game. From your hand, you must play cards that "beat" the cards of a table. So, a pair beats a single card, three of a kind beats a pair, and so on. You can play "straights," with the idea that longer straights beat shorter straights and more cards beat fewer cards. When you beat the cards on the table, you collect them and each one is worth one VP.

*Scout in progress. Clockwise from bottom left: Steve, Mike, Scott, and Duane.*

If you can't beat 'em, you take a card from either end of what's played (never from the middle) and the bank pays the player who put down the cards one VP.

So, the idea is to play or pick up cards to make larger and





larger combos of cards. When a person plays all his cards, the round ends. Cards still in your hand subtract one VP per card. Tally VPs and onto the next round, with a game equal to a number of rounds equal to the number of players.

To be fair, this is a fairly easy game to learn, once you refrain from rearranging the cards. There are a few techniques that the better players used that were explained to me, although usually after a round ended. If anything had to do with the circus, it was beyond me.

We had a five-player game and it went well enough, but against four experienced players, I came in dead last. Steve was the winner.

Innocuous enough game.

### **Space Base: Four-Player Game**

I've extolled the virtues of *Space Base* before (see the 08/23/2023 AAR). So, pulling this out to play again was a joy. We set up a four-player game, with each player controlling a spaceship company. The veneer could be trucks, sailing ships, mules, or anything else, but spaceships it is.

In short, die rolls give you temporary space bucks, permanent revenue, or VPs depending on the 2d6 die roll and the card associated with the roll. You upgrade your fleet by buying more ships, which fit into slots on your board, replacing the existing card. That replaced card is then flipped around and tucked underneath your board. If another player rolls the number on this flipped around card, you get space bucks too.

You can have multiple flipped around cards on the same number, which is really sweet when another player rolls that particular number.

*The four-player version of Space Base. Left to right: Mike, Ray, and Steve.*

There are more card gimmicks than just straight-up bucks and VPs, some which require two or more die rolls to activate and others that let you shift the die roll number up one or down one. The selection of the right

spaceships, considering the odds of the activation of said spaceships, and the luck of the dice all figure into the game.

One main gimmick is the use of the 2d6 rolls. You can either use the total of both dice to get the goodies on one card, or, use each die to activate the goodies on two cards. As you can figure out, cards in the 1 through 6 slots can get called on twice as much as cards in the 7 to 12 slots. The designers figured that out too and thus the 7 to 12 slots get higher-valued cards.

I like the interaction of the cards -- you can get some space bucks or VPs or other goodies from other players' rolls. Likewise, your elation might be short-lived if your die rolls consistently miss your high-value cards. The dice giveth and the dice taketh away.

As the rounds go by, there comes a tipping point where you want to maximize VPs instead of space bucks. In my case, I missed the tipping point entirely. The winner, Ray, did not.





## Space Base: Seven-Player Game

We used the expansion to expand the game to include seven players. It plays the same, except each player receives a flipped around card in the 7 and 8 card slots. They need to be rolled three times, but basically allow a free buy of a card or a free die roll (but only applying the results to your own flipped around cards).

*The 7-player Space Base game. Clockwise from bottom left corner: Mike, Ray, Erik, Steve (standing), Sean, and Murph.*



Round and round the players went. I thought I was doing well when I looked up and saw that Ray was (again) ahead in VPs.

You really can't change a lot during the mid to end phase of the game. He stood off a number of challengers to win again.



*My trading empire partway through the game. Still some blank spaces to fill. I have 7 VPs (blue cube).*

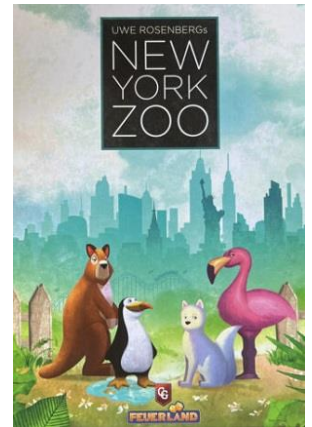
One thing I noticed was that in these larger games, you often will see a nice spaceship card be bought by other players before your turn comes around again. I had set up a VP machine on other players' roll of 9 and needed to add a slot-10 card to pop up a shift the die roll down one. Alas, by the time a slot-10 card came up, it was the last turn of the game.

I like this eurogame. Everyone plays at all times. For a seven-player game, it moves faster than, say, the *Axis & Allies* boardgames and *7 Wonders of the World* (which are the only other seven-player games I've played).

## New York Zoo: Needs Ergonomics

It's not a good start when players have trouble moving along spaces on the board because sometimes you count them and sometimes not. Worse, all players move a common elephant meeples one to three spaces as their moving piece, so there is not a heckuva lot of strategy involved in landing on a particular space.

*My zoo enclosures with red kangaroos, pink flamingo, and white arctic fox. A black penguin to be named later. No idea what the green space does except take up space.*





Why the zoo has a rampaging elephant loose is beyond me. Veneer rarely is a concern of eurogames.

The gimmick is a bunch of irregular cutout cardboard "cages" stuck in some spaces that you need to build your zoo on your individual board. The cages sorta resemble *Tetris* pieces and you fit them together on a grid that is only half of your board. First one to completely fill the grid wins, even if you have no animals.

When you move, you either land on a *Tetris* piece space and pick up a "cage" or land on a meeple space and pick up either two of the iconed meeples (fox, kangaroo, penguin, meerkat, and flamingo) or one meeple of your choice. These go into the cages, one species to a cage.

Every so often, the elephant strolls over a breeding space, where two or more icons in a cage generate one more icon. When you fill up a cage with meeples, they animal meeples disappear and you pick a square or rectangle amusement ride or concession stand to fill in the spaces of your zoo. I have no idea what happened to the animals -- maybe slaughtered to provide food for the concession stands? Meerkat burgers taste like chicken. Or so I'm told.

*The animals are running the asylum: Clockwise from left: Ray, Steve, Mike (observing), Erik, and Sean. Steve is moving the rampaging elephant on the dopey Zoo board.*



I have no idea of the use of the grassy half of the board. Maybe it's Central Park. The least the game could have is a Simon and Garfunkel concert shape, or, a Shakespeare in the Park shape. I suppose we should be glad that the penguins stay in their habitat instead of *Madagascar*-like special forces penguins.

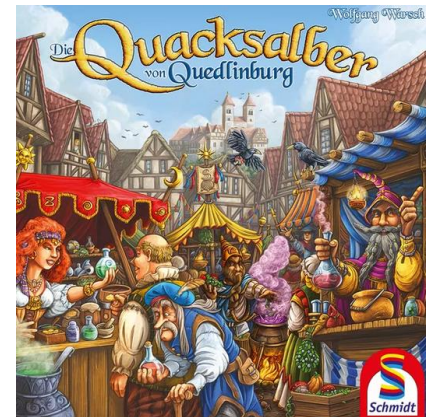
Around and around we went, correcting ourselves constantly about which space the elephant needed to count and which not until Steve won. You can just smell all the design kludges that were needed to make it presentable. It certainly needs a lot of ergonomic work on the main board. I remain unimpressed.

### ***The Quacks of Quedlinburg: Brew Baby Brew***

*Quacks* is the opposite of *New York Zoo*: I'm impressed. It's a tad dumb in concept, but great in execution. The boil, boil, toil and trouble idea of mixing ingredients in a cauldron to make a potion suffers from a convenient forgetfulness and inconvenient randomness about adding ingredients. Yet, this "push yer luck" game tinged with resource management is rather captivating (see the 6/29/2022 AAR for my initial review and recap).

One side note about the components. The basic box contains cardboard counters, but Steve got the \$80 Kickstarter option that uses nicely weighted plastic ingredients that jingle in the bag. These premium pieces are fantastic to manipulate.

You start with two ingredients worth 1 space each and seven explosive ingredients -- four worth 1 boom each, two worth 2 each, and one worth 3 -- in a bag. You randomly draw one per turn from the bag and place it in your cauldron. After each ingredient pick and placement, you decide whether or not to stop or draw again. If you place 8 or more booms, the potion explodes and you must stop. Each individual cauldron contains a circular track with Resource Points and Victory Points. If you stop, you get both. If you go boom, you can pick either the RPs or VPs. Use RPs to buy more ingredients that get added to the bag and VPs are VPs -- most at the end of nine rounds is the winner. The more ingredients placed on the track, the higher the RPs and VPs. Some spaces also yield a ruby crystal, which can be used to refill the mulligan flask (use the flask to remove the last-placed tile) or start a little further along the track.





Ingredients interact with other ingredients, so you can get track bonuses like extra spaces, remove the last played ingredient, extra rubies, and so on. A common card per round offers additional wrinkles to the use of ingredients.

*Just a quintet of quacks (l to r): Sean, Erik, Doreen, and Steve.*



Despite the illogical veneer of dropping in random ingredients, including those you know go boom, the game works. It's fast, it's variable, it has a 'rat-tail' VP catch-up mechanic to keep the players close but not too close, you need to figure out what ingredients to buy to maximize other ingredients' effects, and a little math to figure out how many boom tiles are left in the bag.

Of course, the randomness of the draw often makes all these calculations moot. Sometimes you can pull just about all your ingredients to generate a high RP/VP total and other times, you pull all boom ingredients.

Erik won this excellent, fun game.

### **Fit To Print: Animal Newspaper Layout**

This is a pure *Tetris*-style fit-the-shapes game that uses the veneer of newspaper layout along with a lot of rules that violate every aspect of newspaper layout. How do I know? I started out writing for newspapers as a "stringer" in high school, covering local boards, police, courts, and other Jimmy Olsen-pertinent stories. Alas, no Superman in my town.

FYI: Stringer means a freelance gig where you get paid per inch of printed story. The stories are "strung" together and measured.

You randomly pick a variety of square or rectangular tiles of various sizes that represent three different types (colors) of news stories, photographs, and adverts. Then you lay them out as the front page of a newspaper, making sure you follow all the rules like no photos next to each other, no same-colored stories next to each other, and photos need specific colored stories next to them.

Obviously, the rules have nothing to do with layout, especially because real stories can be edited down to fit and photos can be resized or placed next to each other and so on.

This is a timed game. We played the "relaxing" time of five minutes to pick the tiles (all face-down) to put on a cardboard desk and then five minutes to arrange the tiles on the gridded front page. VPs accrue per story and reduce if you took too many random stories.

*My Friday edition. I missed filling two squares. Excess tiles are on the desk (top left). A card offered some layout wrinkles.*



Special stories need to cover a specific space on the page and provide you with rule exemptions, extra points, or other benefits.

It's easy to lay out a page, but it's hard to follow all the rules. That's kinda the point. Since you pick for five minutes and pile the tiles on a small desk,



you need to remember the pickings. When you lay out the tiles, you inevitably need a different color story or a different shaped tile.

I ended up picking way too many tiles. I lost a lot of points. It literally took me to the end of the game to discern that the back of tile offers a clue about how the front side was oriented (vertically or horizontally). Doh!

Although I kept thinking all you needed was a pair of scissors to crop a photo or lop off excess text like real layout people do, this *Tetris*-like game is better than *New York Zoo*.

Then again, maybe an electronic version with editing could be a legacy-style game.

A game lasts three rounds: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday editions. The Saturday front page is larger than the Friday and the Sunday is larger than the Saturday. As I've often noted, eurogame veneers are often utter nonsense.

You'd think a veteran newspaper guy like me would ace this. Well, there's a reason why I was a reporter, not a layout artist. Sean took this one.

## Other Games

While I was playing the above, others played other games. I have no idea how they played, but I snapped a pic of *Expedition*.

They seemed to be enjoying the learning game.

*A game of Expedition. Bottom left corner and clockwise: Mike, Duane, Scott, and Murph.*



Thanks, Steve for hosting another great Game Day.

## On My Mind: Journalism Games

by Russ Lockwood

*Fit To Print* got me thinking about newspapers, albeit in a curmudgeonly "better in the old days" way, when even small market newspapers existed and employed reporters to find and write about the news of a place, editors to polish up the prose, fact checkers to doublecheck the facts, and production folks to layout the articles and advertisements on the page before sending it out to print.

Newspapers contained more than news -- investigative pieces, editorials, op-eds, product reviews, letters, comics, puzzles, and so on -- but the news was its focus. It kept the public informed and public officials on their toes.

It was such a pillar of society, that long ago it earned the nickname The Fourth Estate as a counter-balance to the other three. It also earned the nickname Yellow Journalism in the late 1800s for efforts to boost sales with sensationalist stories, true or otherwise.

Nowadays, newspapers are an endangered species. They survived TV, but the internet continues to erode advert revenue and readers. Large companies buy them up, cut staff, loot the real estate assets, and leave husks of once vibrant publications. Even Billionaire Bezos is cutting staff at the *Washington Post*. Maybe BB needs a new spaceship.

You might have heard the phrase "zombie papers" that do nothing but reprint long AP articles that contain very little news. I have three in my area. All are owned by the same company, lack local reporters and editors, literally print the same AP articles, and are next to useless from a news standpoint.

While some web sites, mostly those by newspapers, offer news, the internet does to news what cable stations do to TV shows and movies: adverts are the product, not the content. And it's no surprise that our society is cocooning into smaller and smaller circles without being exposed to a multitude of fact-checked viewpoints.

While this may be the ravings of a long-time journalist, newspapers mirror a decline in overall appreciation for balance. I'm not sure *Fit To Print* will restore balance in the universe, but it's interesting that someone designed a game around newspaper layout. Maybe there are more journalism games that might entice a new generation to think about news via paper instead of doom scroll.

Vinyl records were dead and yet they are making a tiny comeback. Flip phones, too. Newspapers? Who knows...



# Historicon 2023: Game Master Awards

by Joby Miller, *Historicon Convention Director*

*I covered Historicon in the July AAR (see the 8/4/2023 AAR) but only included an abbreviated list of awards. Here is the full list. -- RL*

## 2023 Duke Seifried Game Master of the Year Award

Awarded annually at Historicon to a Game Master (or GM Team) from among the past year's Best of Show and Best Theme recipients. Selected by the Awards Committee and the previous Game Masters of the Year, usually for those who won the top awards at multiple HMGS conventions.

**The award goes to: Martyn Kelly**

Martyn had won Best of Theme at Historicon 2022 for The Battle of Ravenna 1512 and Best of Show at Cold Wars 2023 for 3rd Para, Forward Operating Base, Helmand Province, Afghanistan 2011.

**Best of Show:** Khartoum! The Wargame, by Jim Purky

**Best of Theme:** The Alamo, by Walt Siko

**Best Terrain:** Siege of Fort St. Elmo 1565, by Doug Fisher

## Pour Encourager Les Autres (PELA) Awards

Selected from all historical miniatures events throughout the Convention:

Racing in Germany, by Jon Lundburg

Khartoum! The Wargame, by Jim Purky

Siege of Fort St. Elmo 1565, by Doug Fisher

Gnome Wars: The Assault on Fort Lockhart - September 12, 1897, by Jim Stanton

Fort Necessity, by Bill Molyneaux

Engagement at Santa Marta, July 1813, by Timothy Wilson

The Panzer Lehr Counterattack, by Steve Waddell

Test of Honor – The Shimonoseki Incident, by David Hill

Resupply Indeed Sir, by Bradley Pflugh

Hail of Fire: Grossdeutschland at Kursk, July 5th 1943, by Robert Schaible

Hello 2nd Armor! The Battle of Bloody Gulch, by Michael Gesser

Gettysburg – July 2nd, by Benjamin Bentley

Peleliu: A LWTV Campaign Experience, by Tony Marano and Miles Reidy

Maltese Falcone, by Joe McGrath

Preston Joins the Fight, Chickamauga 1863, by Michael Pierce

The Mirrors of Mortlake – England, 1583, by Jeff Wasileski

Cornwallis Breaks Out, Burwell's Farm, Sept. 17, 1781, by David Bonk

McPherson's Ridge, Gettysburg Afternoon of July 1, 1863, by Nate Gerstner

Hail of Fire – Battle of Stalingrad, by Michael Pooler

Pony Wars, by Walter Leach

Gettysburg, Day 2: Battles for the Peach Orchard and Cemetery Ridge - Part 2, by David Rollins

A Day at Red Beach 2, by Pete English

Wolverines!, by Michael Pierce

Breakthrough: Treat 'em Rough! by Phil Viverito

## GM Award Judging Teams

The teams are volunteers, usually previous award winners and industry members, all giving their personal convention time to honor gamemasters.



GM Awards Judges for Historicon 2023 included: Steven Boegemann (Awards chair)

And alphabetically: Cliff Brunken, Frank Chadwick, Bob Chica, Annemarie D'Amato, Patrick Devine, James McGaughey, Matthew Fridirici, David Good, Julie Graham, Tom Harris, Martyn Kelly, Glenn Kidd, Jeff Kimmel, Russ Lockwood, Michael Murphy, Erik Pulkka, Jason Rashon, Bill Rutherford, Joe Swartz, and Ron Weaver.

## HMGS Fall In! 2023: November 3 – 5, 2023

by Scott Landis ([director@fall-in.org](mailto:director@fall-in.org))

Greetings to all historical miniatures gamers, game masters, historians, vendors, artists, and others who are members of our great gaming community. I am pleased to announce that Fall In! 2023 planning is underway.

The convention takes place Friday – Sunday, November 3 – 5, at the Wyndham Lancaster Resort and Convention Center (2300 Lincoln Highway E, Lancaster, PA 17602-1114). The theme this year is "America: Rise to World Power, 1898 to Present." It's the final part of our combined "America at War" Convention themes for the year. Registration is now open.

So far: Over 370 Games (Thurs: 16, Fri 180, Sat 164, Sun 13), 36 Hobby U classes, 14 War College seminars and 13 different Tournaments along with almost 60 different beginner and kid friendly games.

*I've already registered. See you there! -- RL*



**FALL IN!® 2023**  
November 3-5, 2023  
Wyndham Resort and Convention Center, Lancaster, PA





## ***Snappy Nappy:*** **Waterloo For Kids and Parents**

*Article and photos by Jon*

*As it happened, Jon created and umpired a Snappy Nappy Campaign in a Day game in Pennsylvania. He sent along a recap and some photos from his event and first-ever time GMing SN. -  
- RL*

The campaign was the Battle of Waterloo. It even included rain events and Napoleon taking a nap -- sitting out of the game for 10 minutes. The game board was six tables. We wanted to add more but didn't have the space. We also ran out of folding tables.

We had nine kids show up to play, with three of them never having played a miniatures game. We even had four parents that played along and four other parents watching the game. The kids want to do more big games like this.

The parents were thrilled to see it and amazing by the scale and all the painted minis.

It was so amazing! The magazines -- they all loved the magazines! One was so thrilled, he was reading it while waiting to get onto a table. Yes there were a few budding history buffs here.

A retired Vietnam veteran was there and read the magazine. He found it fascinating that we have this much information about the various battles, including troop numbers and movement. He also enjoyed playing, learning the tactics of the time. Still, he enjoyed himself as a first-time gamer.

The kids want to do another *Snappy Nappy* game next summer, but they also want to play a Battle of the Bulge game and we think we'll use *Rommel*. We think squares would be easier for some of the less-experienced players. They are trying to design a map of the battle that includes the 110th Regiment because it was a PA unit. Some of the families had relatives who served in the parent division.





Thank you again for all your advice and support. It has meant the world to me and my brother doing this because it's been so amazing to see people come together and play games.

*The magazines he's referring to are circa year-2000 issues of Napoleon that were originally intended to accompany the PBS TV special on Napoleon. The issue contains a full overview of the Napoleonic era, including the major campaigns and battles. Jon said he expected 10 gamers, so I sent him 10 copies...guess I should've sent him a few extra. -- RL.*



## New Wargame: Galahad's Ordeal - Myitkyina 1944

by Paul

*From the press release for this hex wargame -- RL:*

*Galahad's Ordeal* portrays the Allied attack and siege of Myitkyina during WWII. The town and its nearby airfield were a constant threat to the Allied airlift operations that ferried war materials and supplies from India to Nationalist China. The Japanese occupation of the town also severed the only land access from India to China for the Allies.

When the Japanese offensive at Imphal and Kohima was launched the Allied High Command viewed the battle as an opportunity to launch a counter offensive by the US 5307th Infantry Group (Merrill's Marauders, also nicknamed Galahad Force by their British and Indian Allies) supported by Nationalist Chinese forces against Myitkyina, deep into the rear areas of Japanese occupied northern Burma.

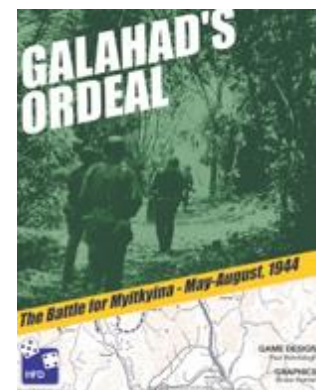
The Allies calculated that the Japanese had to have weakened their hold here to launch their massive offensive to the west. Unfortunately for the Allies, the US forces were badly depleted from earlier battles, and the Japanese had not weakened their grip at Myitkyina, and instead, anticipating just such an attack, were in the process of strengthening the town's garrison. One of the most costly and prolonged battles of the Burma theatre would be waged here.

**Contains:** 10 pages of rules, One 11x17-inch map, 96 double-sided counters, and two pages of tables and charts.

Units are mostly battalions with some companies. Each hex is about a half mile across. A turn represents about 1 week of time.

**Cost:** \$15.95 plus shipping. A set of mounted counters is an additional \$8.00.

<https://www.hfdgames.com/ordeal.html>





## PR News: 3D Printed Minis In Color -- *TimeStrike*

by Russ Lockwood

I received a pre-press release for a company called Adventure Together that was advertising a Kickstarter for 3D fantasy miniatures that are printed in color along with a game called *TimeStrike: Shadow of Fear*. I guess that pre-announcing a KS is a thing, so I can't tell you prices or release dates or anything else.

But I like the idea of already painted miniatures, mostly because I'm a mediocre painter at best and painting is one of the "barriers" to the hobby. A barrier to me, anyway. Our hobby has a new crop of fantastic 3D printed minis, not to mention an ever expanding line of plastics, but all in a monochrome color.

I always wondered how *HeroClix* could offer multicolored minis out of the box and not miniature companies. I suppose it's about scale and price. From the release:

"Adventure Together is thrilled to offer its community of players the full-color miniature option they have been asking for. By aligning with Only-Games and MyMiniFactory, the global leaders in on-demand 3D printing and decentralized ecosystems for creators, this partnership promises to deliver accessible and affordable wargaming miniatures complete with unparalleled details, vivid colors, and aesthetic immersion unlike anything you've experienced before."

"This partnership is about more than just cutting-edge technology and accessible, table-ready miniatures," commented Chris Torres, Adventure Together Co-Founder. "It's about breathing life into the experiences we share as a community and empowering gamers to immerse themselves in worlds of rich, vibrant color. I believe together, with Only-Games and MyMiniFactory, we have the potential to set a new industry standard and I couldn't be more thrilled to work alongside a team whose values align so closely with our own."

"Only-Game's pre-colored 3D printed miniatures will usher in the next generation of accessible miniature wargames with: Table-ready miniatures at a fraction of the time and cost; On-demand printing and shipping of miniatures in full color; 10M+ color combinations with unrivaled quality."

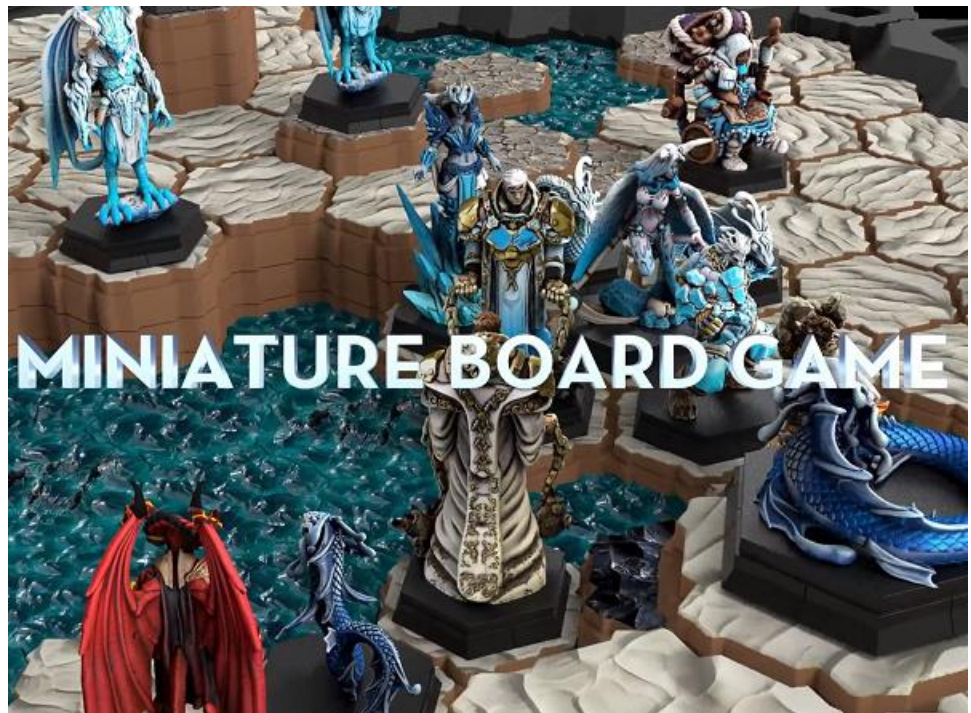
I've exchanged e-mails with a co-founder of the company, with planned KS launch on October 24.

Obviously, fantasy miniatures dwarfs the historical miniatures market, so that's where they'll be starting with 40 miniatures already designed.

I asked if they might offer a historical line, such as medieval knights or renaissance. Not right now, but they have been kicking around an unspecified line of "ships."

Stay tuned.

And if you're like me and roll some dice with fantasy miniatures from time to time, take a look at the website. If the production-line product matches the prototypes, and you don't have to paint them, that might generate a surge of interest in miniatures...and maybe historical minis down the road.



## New Wargame: La Bataille de Wavre

by Ed

From my inbox: -- RL

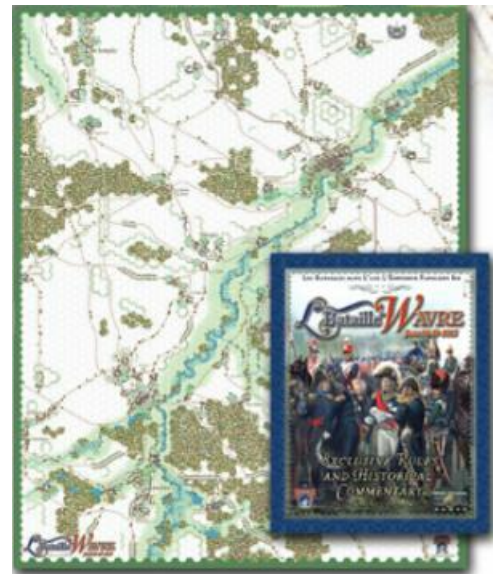
*La Bataille de Wavre: Second Edition* is an expansion set that requires *La Bataille de Mont St. Jean* or the Deluxe Edition of *La Bataille de Ligny*.

*Wavre* contains two 22x34-inch maps, rulebook (including scenarios and historical commentary), and charts and tables. The counters and organizational charts are in either of the two other games. *Wavre* is an expansion set.

For more info:

Clash of Arms Games: [www.clashofarms.com](http://www.clashofarms.com)

*Clash of Arms* will be at Fall-In. – RL



## News: Hussite War and WWII Air Strike: *Blind Faith* and *Infamy Avenged* Wargames

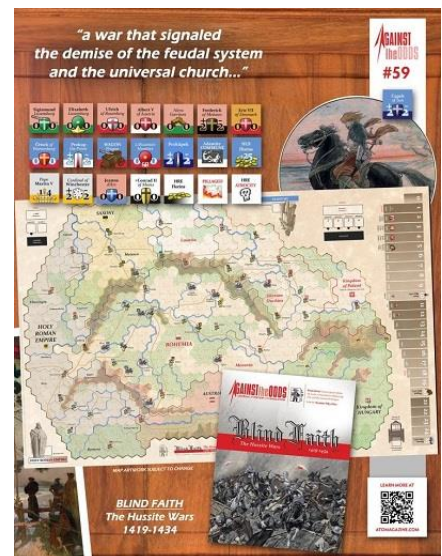
by Russ Lockwood

ATO's latest wargame, *Blind Faith: The Hussite Wars 1419-1434*, came back from the printers, was incorporated into issue 59 of the magazine, and sent off to subscribers and buyers. Also included was a small mini-game of 1944 USN air attacks on Truk called *Infamy Avenged: Operation Hailstone*. The magazine is available direct through [atomagazine.com](http://atomagazine.com) or your FLGS.

For the record, I was Staff Developer for the Hussite game designed by Jason Juneau and shared development duties with Lembit Tohver for the WWII game designed by Paul Rohrbaugh. Discussions are on ConSimWorld and Board Game Geek.

*Blind Faith* contains a full 22x34-inch map and 180 counters while *Infamy Avenged* contains a 8.5x11-inch map and 36 counters. With 64-page magazine: \$44.95.

Rules for download are available with more information located at [www.atomagazine.com](http://www.atomagazine.com)



## Correction: Malayan vs. Malaysian

by AJ

A couple of notes about your review of *The Malayan Emergency*: You changed the title in your write-up to "The Malaysian Emergency". The Federation of Malaya didn't change the name to Malaysia until after the Emergency.

The Malayan communists' objective was not the takeover of the country; rather, they wanted the British to recognize the party as a legitimate political force (albeit armed) with which to instigate civil war / revolution. The communists could not have succeeded in a full takeover as they did not have the resources or a major power patron.

That said, it's quite appropriate the book was subtitled "*The Crucial Years: 1949-53*", as that's the time post-war challenges (reconstructing the Malayan and UK economy, India, Palestine) slowed down effective response. For the communists, those years were the time when they still had access to weapons caches.

*Yes indeed, the actual title of the book is called The Malayan Emergency. Thanks, AJ for your eagle eye. Sorry, folks for mistyping the title in the AAR, but I corrected it on the hmgs.org posting. --RL*





*Pre-game: Table layout. Austrians/Russian troops on left, French on right. Phil (left), GM Chris, and host Dave.*

## **Sokolnitz at Austerlitz: A Pain In The Flank**

*by Russ Lockwood*

The French sorted out their defensive line along the Goldbach Stream, but General 'L'Audace' Russ put his hand to his ear and listened to the sound of the approaching Austrian and Russian army. Crickets. He heard crickets.

The spyglass confirmed it. Not a single enemy soldier was in front of him. He looked at his tiny force: Two infantry regiments of two battalions each. He had a town to hold, and so stuffed one battalion inside. A second battalion lined up opposite a patch of woods that extended into the middle of the battlefield. That would make for a good forward position to blunt an enemy attack. The other two were ready to advance.

Advance?

The enemy, under Archduke 'Iron' Mike, had a dozen battalions facing General 'Vauban' Sam, who lined up as best he could to defend The Sokolnitz Castle. General 'Parkour' Phil had a mix of infantry and cavalry to defend the right side of the French line.

*The French: Phil (left) and Sam. The Castle is the Tudor building in front of Sam. My troops are shown,*



That left a cavalry brigade of three regiments. As L'Audace had open fields, the two co-commanders graciously allowed Russ its command for counterattacks.

Counterattacks?

L'Audace had no such intention of allowing the Austrians any sort of peaceful march towards the Goldbach. None. The goal was to crush the enemy, drive them before you, and hear the lamentations of the women.



*The Austrians/Russian (left to right): Mike, Marc, and Dave. That's a lot of Allied troops!*



Or in tabletop parlance, turn the flank, pin the infantry in square, and use infantry to crunch the squares. And if the Austrians under Iron Mike came out marching, the cavalry would run them over. I only wish I had artillery.

Marshal 'Marksman' Marc drew up in the center with another dozen battalions and Marshal 'Dasvidaniya' Dave with lots of infantry plus regular cavalry and Cossacks had the flank opposite Parkour Phil.

*L'Audace's troops, minus one battalion in a town.*

## Grab The Wheel

With the opening of the battle, I saw no other enemy troops facing me. I half expected them, but no, all I faced were crickets. Yep. No-Buddy or his crickets.

My cavalry flared around the woods. The infantry huffed and puffed as fast as it could to catch up. Iron Mike began to get worried. He was trying to march to the Castle as fast as he could, but seeing me come out to play, immediately realized his flank was about to become swiss cheese if he didn't start turning to face.

Man, I wish I had some Swiss troops to make that joke more applicable.

Up went the squares as Iron Mike fiddled and finagled his troops, at one point trying to stuff a 12-inch wide line into a 9-inch wide spot between two squares. You have to watch these Austrians like a hawk.

In Shako, squares never fire. Also, infantry fire straight ahead and if any part of the front stands are blocked, the unit can't fire. I empathize with Mike's dilemma ... but not all that much.

He kept advancing, I kept turning, and he kept peeling off units to cover his ever-lengthening flank.

*Turn 1: Foreground - My cavalry and infantry surge across the open field, looking to turn the Austrian flank. Background - Dave sends out the Cossacks.*

## Das Reinforcement

On Turn 2, a big Austrian force equal in size to his division showed up to his right opposite me, immediately cutting off any thoughts I had to go deep into his open flank. Next thing you know, a wall of infantry entered the battlefield and stutter-stepped its way into my line of march.

Over the next couple turns, the enemy line trudged forward, but not too far. The entire Austrian line bent into an arc and I was heading into the middle. My plan was falling apart, although I inflicted a considerable delay and disorganization on his once neat marching columns.

*Turn 2: Parkour Phil (right) leaps into action. My cavalry turn, but look at that tray of Austrian reinforcements coming on this turn.*

I paused. There's only so much I can do with 1:4 odds.





I swung a little wider with an infantry battalion and a cavalry unit on the far left, trying to adjust to his new-found division. In my center, I had just turned the corner of the woods with a cavalry unit and brought up the third to cover the gap with my left-most units. My infantry had infiltrated the woods and formed up on the edge, taking advantage of the terrain bonus and threatening more of Mike's flank.

*End Turn 3: My cavalry threatens Mike's advancing columns, but his arc of a line is already starting to form.*

### The Castle of Sokolnitz

Meanwhile, Vauban Sam adjusted his few troops to meet the enemy onslaught. His cannons boomed and boomed and boomed -- and never hit a thing. Not even in canister range could he hit a thing. Apparently, his artillerymen neglected to load anything other than powder.

Indeed, the first inkling of a bigger problem was a swooping Cossack attack by Dasvidaniya Dave, who swerved a cavalry unit all over the battlefield to get at Sam's artillery.

This also seemed to impart a big delay on Marc's infantry, which had to wait until the Cossacks passed.

Amazingly, Vauban Sam's artillerymen could swing sponges better than shoot and sent the Cossacks packing, further glomming up the center for the Austrians.

A later attack on the cannoneers by Mike's infantry was also sent packing. They couldn't hit the broad side of an Austrian division, but they were the best melee troops on the table.

*Mike forms lots of squares to protect his flank.*

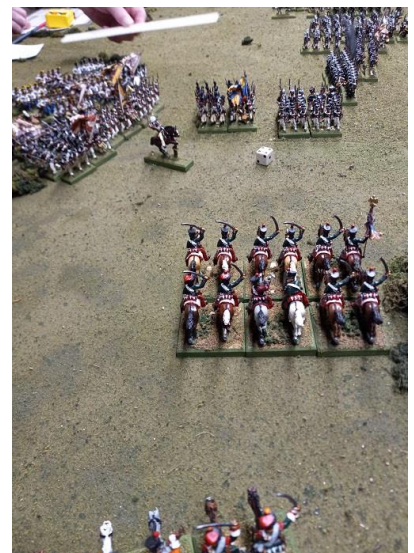
### Over On Our Right

Alas, I could not spy much on the right side of the line, but Parcour Phil lived up to his name and vaulted onto the wargame table, unwilling to wait for the enemy to close. Dasvidaniya Dave's attack on the town was repulsed.

But all that cavalry on the far right could not be held in check for long and Dave stormed ahead in a gallant, all-or-nothing charge.

I'm not sure exactly what happened, but Phil's French cavalry swept the enemy cavalry from the field.

*Dave's Cossacks charge the guns from the right while Mike's columns charge the Castle on the left.*





## Iron Mike's Castle Attack

About this time, Iron Mike launched two attack columns directly at the Castle. At least Sam's troops defending the place could shoot.

The attacking troops were staggered backwards by the volley.

Oh, they tried again, and again were repulsed.

No matter, more Austrian battalions aligned behind them, waiting for their turn against the Castle.

Also about this time, a French infantry division showed up behind Phil and began filtering into the front line. Austrian morale fell like a cannonball onto a loader's foot.

*My cavalry charge, with casualty and disorganized markers.*



## Infantry Firing Mechanic

By this time, the enemy had fully deployed against my small force. A straight up shoot-out between my two infantry units against his dozen was out of the question. Worse, the way support works for melee, he had a virtually impregnable wall, with side and rear supports.

That left the cavalry.

The infantry fire volley mechanic means that infantry that fire and miss at charging infantry get disordered, but infantry that fire and miss at charging cavalry are fine and dandy.

Yes, I know. A dopey rule where marching men cause panic galore, but tons of charging horse cause nary a ripple of concern.

*End of Turn 5: After my cavalry charge was destroyed, Mike's arc of a line extends from in front of the Castle all the way off photo bottom left corner. My three units showing (and two off photo bottom left corner) are tying up lots of Austrians.*

Also remember that squares never fire. Furthermore, if infantry try and form hasty square and fail, they are disordered, which is often a -2 to melee.

So, what's an infantry unit in line to do when charged by cavalry?

Stand and fire. You have a 1-in-6 chance of hitting the cavalry with a stagger (-1 in melee), a 1-in-6 chance of hitting the cavalry with a casualty (-1 in melee if the cavalry has more damage than the infantry), and a 1-in-6 chance of hitting the cavalry with two casualties (still only a -1 in melee due to more damage). Hence, a 50% chance of





inflicting a -1 and a 33% chance of inflicting a -2 in melee. All factors being equal, on a d6 die, that's pretty significant.

On the flip side, if the cavalry manage to win the melee, they immediately eliminate the infantry.

For infantry, if you fire and get the 50%, you have an advantage, and if you get the 33%, you have a significant advantage. Even if you miss, it's an even up roll.

If the infantry form square (a 66% chance with average troops), the infantry will almost always roll with a +2 significant advantage. If they fail (33% chance), they're generally swept away.

I'll leave it to you to figure out the final odds, but for me, I usually stay in line and fire.

*Phil repulses Dave's infantry attack on the town.*

### My Cavalry Choice

So that's the dilemma I faced. Yet, Sam needed some relief. My infantry in the woods brought fire on Mike's flank and missed. I headed the unit back into the woods.

My flanking plan worked in the sense of disrupting Iron Mike's massing of troops against the castle and town, but I could see that a determined push would engulf me.

So, I bluffed with the nearest cavalry unit, knowing Iron Mike could see two more horse units.

*Now that's a cavalry battle. Dave (top) charges Phil on the far right of the battle.*

When I say bluff, I mean charge the center of his arced line. I was hoping for a small defeat and pull back 18 inches, or three turns' worth of maximum infantry movement. In exchange for a damaged cavalry unit, I would put uncertainty into his advance as instant death could visit his infantry from a successful cavalry attack.

I also needed a little luck.

*Sam's troops in the Castle repels Mike's attack. Amazingly, Sam's artillery does too!*

Well, Mike can read the situation as well as I, and I cut across a unit's firing swath. He decided against forming a square. He hit with the first fire and missed with the second -- the target of my charge. The result was a disorganized and damaged cavalry unit versus an intact infantry unit with rear support. It was a three-pip difference in factors.

Amazingly, we rolled a tie -- inflict one casualty on each and roll again. That's not what I had in mind. I wanted to bounce. The second roll was much in favor of Mike and the





difference was enough to completely eliminate my cavalry unit (which would have escaped without that one-casualty tie).

While my bluff did not work exactly as planned, it still gave him pause. I also managed one infantry shot against his end of the line infantry, but to no effect. Apparently, my troops graduated from the Vauban Sam School of Shooting.

I started to withdraw my most exposed cavalry and the infantry as well. It was time to slowly give ground.

*End Turn 6. I slowly withdraw in the face of overwhelming odds. French reinforcements have already filtered into the center of the line among the towns.*



## Outta Time

We only played one additional turn. At the end of Turn 7 (out of a 10-turn scenario), Umpire Chris surveyed the battlefield and declared the French the winner.

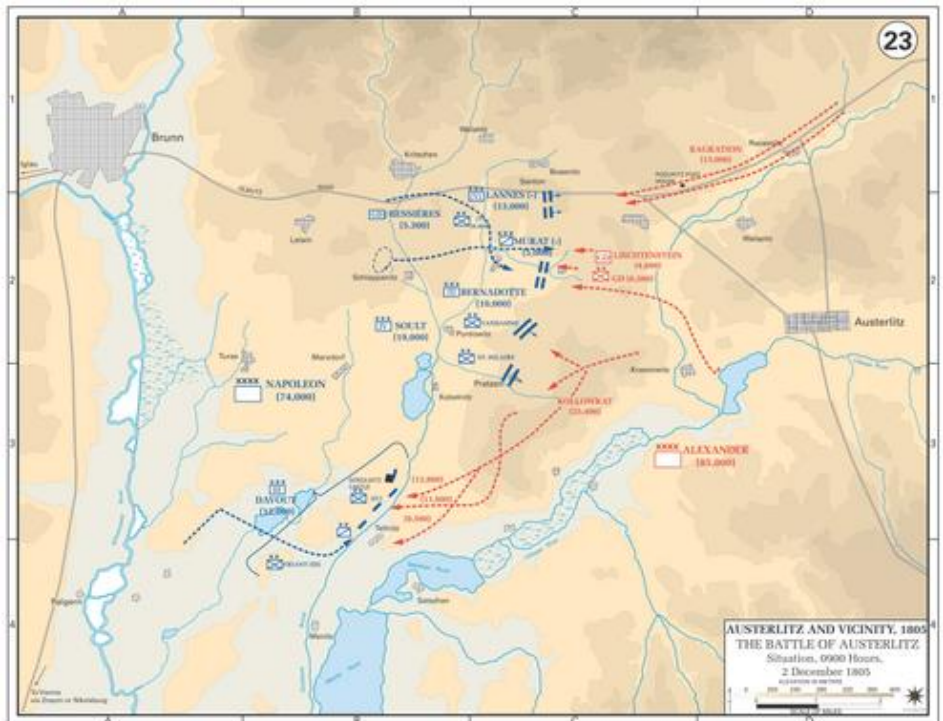
*Map of battle from the web. Our tabletop battle covered the lowermost area of the map around Sokolnitz.*

The Austrians/Russians had to capture three of the four buildings (towns), but they had not taken even one. I never understood the French conditions, which had something to do with keeping all four towns and pushing across the Goldbach stream. I had five units across the Goldbach, which is great for me, but I don't know if that would have been enough for the entire French side.

Nonetheless, good enough to hold out for the sun of Austerlitz to shine and forces on the Pratzen Heights (off table) to come in on the deep Austrian/Russian flank.

Historically, the Austrians/Russians captured the towns, but the French did not break. Napoleon's counterattack up the Pratzen Heights broke the Allied army in half, with the French sweeping into the flank (on our table) and the Austrians/Russians beating a hasty retreat with significant losses.

Thanks, as ever, to Dave for hosting and Chris for umpiring the scenario and providing the gorgeous 28mm figures.





# **Shako Recap: Another Brick In The Wall**

by Mike

Thanks, Chris, for running yesterday's game. Beautiful figures and lots of them. And we saw another sliver of Dave's stash of beautiful model buildings. But who could look? I was busy.

*Mike's troops in foreground and Marc's troops in background. Photo by Mike.*

I don't remember the name of the scenario, but I remember for sure we, the Russian and Austrian armies, lost. I had 18 battalions, 9 Russian and 9 Austrian, on the very right of our line with the assignment of taking the Castle, one out of three towns and a castle, the possession of which was part of the victory conditions. I don't remember other victory conditions. The towns and the castle were on the other side of the table and so were the French. There didn't seem a lot of them ... in the beginning.

Anyways, I have to give kudos to my immediate opponent, who came at me from my right. His French name I have forgotten (*L'Audace -- RL*), but I know him as Russ. He had three cavalry squadrons and three battalions. Not enough to stop my command, but I couldn't ignore them as I marched across the table. And I didn't. I remembered enough *Shako* to know that I could not allow the cavalry to hit my battalions in the flank.

*Mike's arc begins to form as he approaches the Castle and defends against Russ' threatening cavalry on the flank. Marc (left) waits for clearance, GM Chris (center) keeps the game moving, and Phil and Sam (right) shuffle around the troops to defend Sokolnitz. Photo by Mike.*

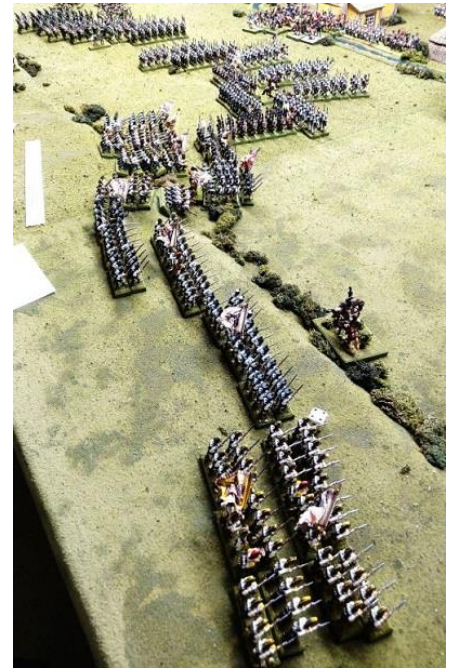
Already in turn 2, Russ' cavalry was in position to do just that. I formed squares on my very right to impede Russ's cavalry. As there is no ZOC in *Shako*, I essentially had to create a wall by filling the gaps between the squares with battalions in line formation. Since squares provide no support in melee, I had to give those battalions rear support which do provide a bonus to the die roll. The numbers assigned to this flank wall started adding up.

My lead battalions hurried towards the castle in the French battleline. Furthermore, my Austrian division came in behind and somewhat to the right of my Russian division. Russ was pushing his command rapidly towards my table edge to my right, and I obviously could not allow the French to get in my rear either, so I positioned more battalions on an angle to my wall (allowing an extra battalion to shoot at an charging unit).

## **Counter Bluff**

I hoped that would persuade Russ to do no more than demonstrate. But noooo.

One of his squadrons charged one of my battalions in line formation, but I had adequate units in position to support, and his charge was destroyed, but at this point I had 13 of my 18 battalions protecting my flank running from my table edge to the castle almost on the other side of the table.





## The Initiative Dilemma

One complication I had in maneuvering my two divisions across the table while protecting my flank, was the initiative rolls for my divisions. Only once did they (almost) move simultaneously.

My command of two divisions was essentially acting too independently for their own good. It took time and caused me enough delay and considerable frustration. Somebody commented that this was very much like the confusion and impediments suffered by historical Russian and Austrian armies in this battle.

*Russ' cavalry charge (lower right corner) in the middle of Mike's arc. Phil (left) and Sam remain confident of holding Sokolnitz. Photo by Mike.*



Anyway, my remaining battalions attacked the castle and was repeatedly thrown back. One of my other battalions charged the French battery adjacent to the castle. This battery had been firing away at my approaching battalions from the beginning. Its shooting was totally inept, but that was likely because the gun crews were practicing their close combat skills. They promptly destroyed my battalion in the melee.

## Achievements Bedeviled

I achieved absolutely nothing. My fellow two commanders didn't fare better, with one in fact a lot worse. Did we play it wrong? I cannot speak in detail to what happened at the other end of the table, but I don't think we ever really had a shot at achieving the victory conditions. Even if my attack on the castle had been successful there were plenty of fresh French troops in the immediate vicinity and taking the castle alone would not produce a victory. We achieved none of our victory conditions.

Could and should I have used fewer of my units to protect my flank? Well, as what I had available to breach the French battleline in my sector and take the castle proved totally insufficient, the answer is an absolute 'Yes!'

However, allowing Russ to hit my flank and rear could have had catastrophic consequences. Phil pointed out to me at the end of the game that I was allowed to roll one initiative die for both my divisions, with a -1 DRM. Had I known/remembered, I would have done so, but I really don't think the scenario was balanced. These are not sour grapes. In my opinion and based on only one game, the scenario needs some tweaking. Just an observation and suggestion. In another game, the French commander across from my command might have played it differently.

But it was another enjoyable evening. Thanks again.

*Hmmm. Only 18 battalions instead of the 24 I thought I faced? Napoleon's official Bulletin will use 24, not 18. However, I am pleased that 13 Austrian units were turned my way against my six French units that crossed the Goldbach. So, more like 1:2 instead of 1:4. Er, I think Napoleon's official Bulletin will use 1:4, not 1:2. I seem to recall some phrase to the effect of "Lie like the Bulletin." History repeats again! -- RL*

## Scenario Soufflé: Allied Complaints

by Dave

The main problem with the game is that after reviewing the initial setup, Chris allowed the three French cavalry regiments to be shifted from the French center (Sam) to the French left (Russ) whereas the scenario only called for four French battalions to start there. That cavalry tied down a lot of allied troops. This had a radical effect on the game and skewed the outcome. Not sure why Chris allowed that to happen.

However, I do thank Chris for putting together the game.

*As the cavalry was useless in the center, they were headed to one flank or another. Phil already had enough cavalry, so it came my way. The cavalry made an impact on an open flank, although I didn't know a second division was going to appear and that dissuaded efforts to turn the flank except for my one bluffing cavalry charge. Mike still*



would have to clear my one infantry battalion from the woods. I was debating whether or not to put a second unit into the woods when I got the cavalry brigade. How I used it showed what a little audacity can do. But I did enjoy the complaint about action from the opposite end of the table. -- RL

## Cavalry Conundrum: Allied Debate

by Mike

We debated briefly whether we should counter by transferring one of Dave's cavalry divisions over as well, but we didn't. Dave's command seemed flimsy to start with, and, I believe, almost gone by the time we stopped the game at turn 7.

*Mike's view of the French advance against the flank at the moment of Russ' cavalry charge. Even this late stage of the game, Austrian troops are marching to the right flank to counter French aggression. Photo by Mike.*



I have no clue how many turns the scenario was designed to last, but there was nothing on the white-board, so I took it upon myself to put 10 turns on the board. We rarely reach two-digit turns in a Friday game, and I thought 10 turns was very optimistic, not least because we had a lot of lead to move.

I was about to push my Austrians forward in a right oblique and Russ would have been forced to fall back. Or die. I would never catch his cavalry, and he would likely lose his two battalions, but they had done their job.

My nine battalions had about 40-44 inches to move to reach the French castle and with wheeling costing double inches, change of formation costing a turn, a bit of congestion, and the woods, seven turns is likely optimistic. My aim was to hit the castle's front and right side (seen from me). Russ' town at the end of the table was not a victory condition for us, as we needed only three of four.

Could and should I have been more aggressive with my Austrians? With the benefit of hindsight, yes. Was my decision to 'build the wall' to protect my division's right flank as it moved forward — some battalions in column and taking artillery fire -- a faulty one? Perhaps, but I am not an experienced Shako player and a slow and methodic advance was the best I could come up with in response to enemy cavalry on the loose on my flank.

Again, I am not uttering sour grapes. Being a GM for a multi-player game takes a lot of time and effort, at least for some of us — and I am one of those — but I think the scenario deserves some tweaking.

*Just think about the complaining if Sam's artillery would have actually hit something, especially in canister range. On the French side, Phil is an experienced Shako player, while Sam and I, like Marc and Mike, only play at Dave's. You don't need to play Shako to understand open flanks and cavalry threats, but you do need to play Shako to understand the mechanics that reward meeting cavalry in line.*

*Alas, line only moves six inches per turn (versus nine inches in column), so moving across 40 or so inches of open field requires five turns in column and seven turns in line. For a Friday, we did seven turns in three hours. That gave Mike two attack tries at the Castle. More turns would have equaled more attack tries. -- RL*

## Austro-Russian Command: Perfect History

by Sam

Good job, Chris! You were able recreate the Austro-Russian debacle.



# ***SimCity* Cards: Do You Need a Computer?**

by Russ Lockwood

Back in the late 1980s, the computer game *SimCity* invaded the offices of *Personal Computing* magazine. When I say invaded, I mean invaded as in the mag's Macintosh was in high demand, much to the consternation of the Macintosh editor. This city-building game captured all our imaginations as we not only struggled to get the most efficient city in place but also connived to secure the Mac to actually play the game.

*Dan (left) and Steve plot to expand the village.*



Nowadays, it's hard to believe a computer game would come out without a Windows version, but back then, the Mac had the graphics oomph. Look up an early game called *Myst* that started to show the graphics potential of the Mac versus IBM PCs and Apple IIs.

Anyway, at some point the computer game was converted into a card game where each card was a city block. It's an older card game, but Dan, Steve, and I decided to pull out the box, dust off the cobwebs, and give it a go. I have no idea how long ago it was since I played it, but a couple decades at least.

## **Conversion to Cards**

Victory is all about the dollars generated by the play of a card. As players place the cards on the table, the village becomes a town and then a city. This is decided by the color bar on the bottom of the card: white, green, and tan. My guess is that tree huggers will hate this game.

Anyway, this bar contains lots of information: dollars, sims required to play the card and sims generated by the card, and two other icons that we apparently did not use: a gun (crime?) and a nuclear fallout shelter sign (war?). These icons and numbers are small in font, but generally readable, although the seated sims and the standing sims need a bit of a squint to discern the difference.

Cards often contain a road, rail, and electric connections that go off the end of the cards. These are important for tallying dollars earned from the later cards, which increase the more cards form a cohesive neighborhood.

In addition, some cards contain text that provide bonus dollars -- often quite a few bonus dollars. Some were based on how many blocks away things were in reference to the played card. Others were based on how many connected cards of a similar type made up a neighborhood.

Steve and Dan were very good at figuring out all of the above. Me? Er, not so much.

## **Playing A Card**

Block by block, our village became a town and then a city. We were using the Atlanta, GA, deck, so it contained a number of local-ish cards. I once played a Plantation. There's a Stone Mountain card in there, too. NYC and Washington DC decks with their own local color are also available.

Along the way, neighborhoods (residential, commercial, agricultural, civic, and government) were formed. Like *Scrabble*, you can add a card to a layout and reap the dollar benefits of the previous cards.



A lot of this is luck of the draw. Steve, for example, drew four airport cards and piled up the dollars. Dan had the last laugh on farm and commercial zones. I ran out of both and came up short a lot of times.

For example, I played a River (one measly dollar) and then played the Hydroelectric Dam (need to be adjacent to a River or Lake) to pick up extra bucks for connected electric lines. Not so fast -- the Hydroelectric Dam had text granting me a bonus for "new" connections. Alas, I had previously played the Power Plant, so all those buck-a-roo connections were not new. You gotta really read the text -- the game's boon and bane.

*The city at the end of the game.*



I took the Dam card back and used a political maneuver worthy of Mayor McCheese's evil twin, Mayor Mayonnaise.

## The Politics of Rezoning

You can replace an existing card with another ("rezoning") if you meet certain criteria about enhancements and services and other attributes that seemed impossible to meet -- or -- if you get the most city council votes. When I played the Power Plant, I automatically got the Mayor card with two votes. That's right. I was the Mayor, only I don't see any rules for kickbacks and bribery. Sheesh, what sort of big-city sim-ulation is this?

Anyway, being Mayor Mayonnaise basically gave me a monopoly. Even after Dan played one councilwoman for one vote, I still had more votes. Plus, I drew two more councilmen and paid the cost to put them in play, not so much for the votes, but to get them out of my hand. I want city blocks, not politicians. And politicians take up space better used for city blocks.

I rezoned with abandon, leveling the Power Plant for a house to get rid of the impediment to my getting more bucks. Mind you, eliminating power to the city has nothing to do with reality outside a game. I then playing the Hydroelectric Dam to connect to the suddenly "new" blocks for big bucks. Hey! Just combatting global warming with renewal energy.

I rezoned lots of blocks to cut Dan and Steve neighborhoods in half to try and stem the dollars they were getting while maximizing mine. Alas, I realized it was far too little, too late.

After that, I fiddled with plots on the fringes, letting the close race play out between Dan and Steve. I finally, fittingly, dropped The Sim City Courier newspaper block far, far away from the action.

What was the first issue called?

*After Action Review (AAR).* You knew that was coming.

Dan edged Steve 271 bucks to 259. Steve probably had the airport named after him. Dan had the University named after him.

Me? 155.

At least that's what was reported to the feds and in the AAR. Mayor Mayonnaise always gets the last laugh.

## Lots Of Looks

I'm afraid my memory of *SimCity* the computer game is warm, fuzzy, and hazy. I don't think I played it after 1990. That said, I do remember using the Godzilla option that sent a lizard rampaging across your city.



As for this card game, I'm guessing it recreated the victory point aspects of the computer game. As a stand-alone game, it requires a close examination of all the permutations of the cards with bonus dollar text. You need to focus on placement with all the road, rail, and electricity connections, which also feeds into the bonus dollars.

It's clever, but it's involved. It's a good thing Dan and Steve owned the game so that we could play according to the rules, or at least a good interpretation in some obscure spots.

Our three-player game took two hours, which included looking up some aspects, but mostly reading all the cards' bonus text to maximize dollar amounts -- in other words, a typical card strategy game.

The cards generate a considerable amount of good natured bantering, often politically incorrect like an episode of Monty Python. With the abuse I took as Mayor Mayonnaise, I should've had the constabulary lock them away in a cell and thrown away the key. Alas, we had a Fire Station, but not a Police Station.

That's the good guff you get with decades of gaming across from these guys. Still, that's also what makes this game interesting to me. Tracking all those card aspects takes a while to process -- if a little too much like work.

## Naval War: Sink or Swim

by Russ Lockwood

After *SimCity*, we brought out an old Avalon Hill card game called *Naval War*. One deck of cards represent individual ships (Bismarck, Hood, New Jersey, Yamato, Missouri, Tirpitz, etc., etc.) and the other deck represents actions (mostly salvos of hit points) and events (like minefields, draw a new ship, submarine attack, etc., etc.).

World War II this is not, except for all the ship silhouettes, but fast-paced it is. If *SimCity* was element overkill, *Naval War* was underkill.

*Steve (right) looks up a rule as Dan and I bring out our fleets.*



## Five For Fighting

Each player gets five ship cards and five action/event cards. Cards with red faces are played immediately. I dropped a minefield in front of Steve and drew a new ship. The other two did the same. When all reds were played, Dan started.

*I drop a minefield in front of Steve's ships.*

You draw one action/event card and play one card. If it is a red faced event, you must play it. If it is a black faced card, you may keep it or play it. Your hand never contains more than five action/events.

When the number of hits from all sources equals the number on the ship card, the ship is sunk and the last player to inflict hits gets the card and the VPs. Many is the time one of us swooped in with a last second salvo to wrest the ship for his own point total.





## The Clever Twist That Often Isn't

Each ship is rated for its main guns. For example, the BB New Jersey has 16-inch guns and the Yamato has 18-inch. Other ships have smaller guns: 15-inch, 14-inch, 12.6-inch, and 11-inch.

Your salvo cards also have an inch number. You need to match the salvo card to the ship card in order to fire. So, Yamato needs salvo cards with 18 inches, the NJ needs 16 inches, and neither can fire the other's shells.

*My small fleet. Note the shell size underneath the silhouette.*



The sad part is that you can find yourself in a position with lots of ships and lots of unusable shell type cards. At one point, I had five 16-inch gun ships, but not a single 16-inch salvo card. It's a missed turn...indeed, several missed turns. I quipped it's easier to fill an insight straight flush than draw a 16-inch salvo card. It's frustrating not to do anything and that's the Achilles heel of the game. A player can be essentially doing nothing but hoping for some sort of offensive card or new ship. We all suffered at one point or another, a strategy is to knock out the opponent's ships to narrow the use of salvo cards to one type. Steve clued me in on that.

The trick is to draw a "get another ship card" and hopefully draw one that had a shell size you can use. That often didn't occur....

## Crapshoots

Aircraft carriers and Torpedo Boats give you a chance to sink one ship with a 1-in-6 die roll. It doesn't happen often, but it does happen. Submarines are the same but with a 2-in-6 chance.

Smokescreens last one turn and stop all attacks except for submarines.

Finally: Destroyers. If the DD card lasts all the way around, the player gets to pick an enemy fleet without a smokescreen and kill off 1d6 ships. Yep: from one to six ships. There's a little bit more to it than that, but not much.

This is a simple game to learn. I think it lasts four rounds -- a round ends when the last event card is played.

Note that a player without ships is not out of the round. He keeps drawing per usual because he can draw cards giving him a new ship, submarine attacks, and so on. Indeed, I once sank a ship by drawing and playing the red internal explosion card. However, if only one player has ships in play, the round ends.

*My fleet towards end of game.*

## The Game

This was a close game. In a three-headed game, you pick and choose who gets minefields, salvos, and so on. At the end of two rounds, Dan was ahead with 62 VPs, I was second with 60 and Steve was third with 58.



The game played with the usual twists and turns of fate. It was still close at the end of three rounds.

On the fourth, Dan seemed in a good spot for the win, especially because I had nothing but 16-inch ships and no 16-inch shells. Firing blanks, as it 'twere. Slowly, Dan picked apart Steve, who found himself with no ships.

Then I drew and played the Destroyer card. Steve had no defense, but he also had no ships. Dan had no smokescreen card, but with five ships, felt confident some would survive.

I rolled the 1d6. It bounced across the table and landed on five pips. I sank all of Dan's ships, collected all the VPs, and because I was the only one with ships in play, the round ended. I made up the ground in points and won, with Dan in second and Steve in third.

The game took two hours for the four rounds. There's nothing that says you can't play fewer rounds if you are pressed for time. It's got a nice tension mechanic when you start with lots of ships and a variety of shells, but when you get stuck with one shell type, it bogs down for that player.



## Books I've Read

By Russ Lockwood

**Dreamland: The Secret History of Area 51.** by Peter W. Merlin. Hardback (8.8x11.3 inches). 555 pages. 2023.

First off, this book is NOT, repeat NOT, about flying saucers, ETs, or anything outer space. The book contains the history, indeed, I'd argue the definitive history, of the air base and aerospace programs developed far from prying eyes in the middle of Nevada. Although primarily created for the development and test flights of the U-2 spyplane in 1955, its facilities and importance expanded over the decades.

A quirk of nature, made Groom Lake a natural airstrip. Infrastructure improvements quickly followed as more and more projects rolled into the base. The D-21 drone (circa 1963), SR-71 Blackbird, F-117, and other experimental aircraft, helicopters, and related prototypes received a thorough testing at Area 51. You can add testing of captured Soviet MiGs during the Cold War to list of accomplishments.

This book details them all in exquisite detail, including test flights, engineering aspects, and various successes and failures. The cover aircraft, Northrop's Tacit Blue, was a stealth technology demonstrator aircraft (p320) that led to a variety of developments that helped mature the technology for later aircraft.

As it is near Nellis AFB, clearing the skies of civilian aircraft was relatively easy. Clearing the hills of civilians proved more daunting, especially because the surrounding land was owned by the Bureau of Land Management and was open to the public. A commercial mine on private land was also embedded within the nearby hills. When you see images of the base through a telephoto lens, these lands provided a legal spot. Eventually, the USAF got Congress to merge the BLM land with the base, and then condemned the mine and took the land as part of the base. The security expanded as well.

As satellites became more common, the base would shut down as they passed overhead. Many experimental flights occurred at night, including sound-deadening configurations on helicopters.

The book contains 392 black and white photos, 371 color photos, three black and white maps, 14 color maps, 38 color patches, seven black and white illustrations, and 14 color illustrations. The photo selection is fantastic.

Short mentions of other Areas, like Area 52 and Area 58, are included.

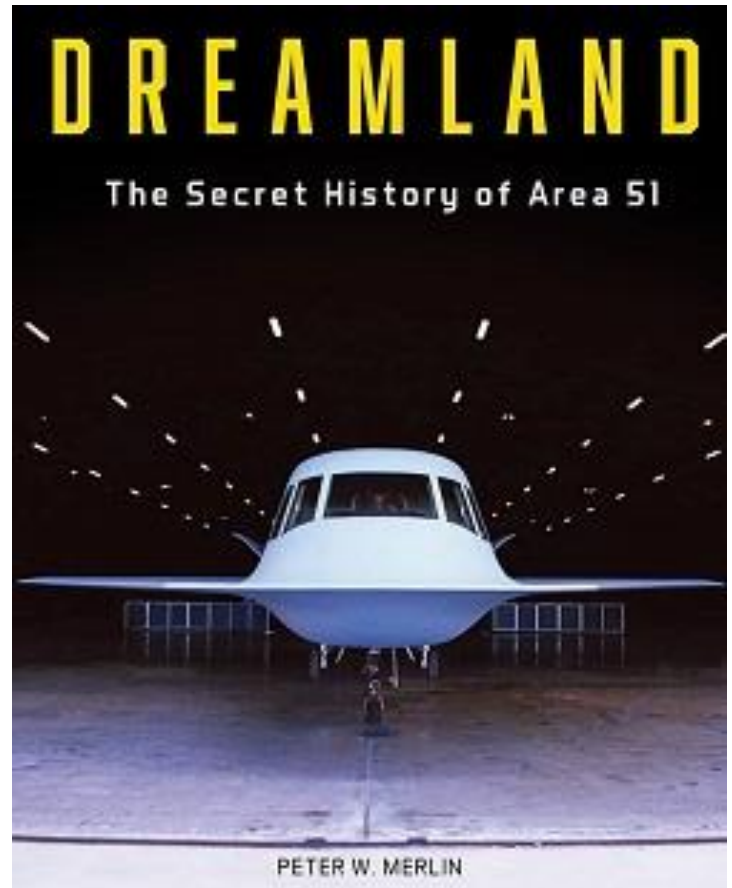
Although UFOs are mentioned in passing regarding travel promotions, the only big-eyed aliens pictured in the book besides restaurants and travel signs are a couple of patches: A winged big-eyed green alien dressed in a suit for the Security Directorate and a US Navy patch with a big-eyed green alien wielding a club at a cartoon version of a P-8A maritime patrol aircraft after it strayed during the Red Flag military exercise -- and USAF officials gave a 'stern reprimand' to the USN crew for turning on their electronics too close to Area 51 (p453).

The prose can be overwhelmingly detailed at times, with exacting attention paid to flight tests and engineering problems and solutions. It's not going to be a summer read at the beach, but given the subject matter, quite understandable.

Are extraterrestrial flying saucers at Area 51? Maybe. It would make sense since that's its history with captured foreign aircraft. But I suspect UFOs are more likely at private company aerospace facilities because you can't snoop around those sites and private companies aren't subject to Freedom of Information requests.

*Dreamland:* It's heavy. It's massive. It's comprehensive. Presumably, aerospace technology and prototype testing continues there or in some other remote Area. For those seeking a detailed recap of once secret aerospace programs like the U-2, SR-71, F-117, and such, here's your tome.

Enjoyed it.





**Desert Armour: Tank Warfare in North Africa.** by Robert Forczyk. Hardback (7.8x9.8 inches). 368 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Gazala to Tunisia 1942-43*

The sequel to *Desert Armour: Tank Warfare in North Africa - Beda Fomm to Operation Crusader 1940-41* (see the review in the 3/25/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org) continues the brilliant recap and analysis of WWII desert operations.

German prowess at armor, Anti-tank, and landmine combined operations combined with British indifference often generated lopsided losses. In one extreme example, the British 23rd Armor Brigade lost 97 out of 104 tanks while the DAK lost two Panzer IIIs (p107).

The prose surrounding El Alamein attacks clearly and concisely explain British defense and Rommel's gamble to bounce the positions as had been done numerous times since Tobruk. The attrition of armor, vehicles, and troops proved too much, the logistics too thin, and the tenacious defense too determined for the German attacks to succeed.

Logistics receives ample attention throughout the battles in Libya and Egypt as well as Operation torch through Tunisia. The DAK needed about 75,000 tons of supplies per month, but outside El Alamein, only received 45,000 tons in July and 52,000 tons in August (p115). You can only capture so much and almost nothing when in a static position.

Appendix 1 (p313) contains a chart of Axis tank deliveries from January to December 1942, but the Allied chart has a single entry for January 1942. I think someone screwed up and didn't include the rest of the chart.

Of note, and somewhat of a surprise that defies conventional wisdom, is the successful defense by Italian General Messe in Tunisia against Montgomery's set-piece attack. It's too little, too late, but Italian leadership proved active and brilliant against a lackadaisical British attack.

Furthermore, German tactical genius receives a black eye at the later stages of the war in Tunisia against US forces, with unimaginative frontal assaults against more mobile US units. This is the sort of deep dive into historical operations that make history new again.

One numbers puzzle: At end of July 1942, the DAK only had 38 operational tanks (p107). Yet a few pages later, the text says the Germans had 128 operational tanks (p115) by the end of July. Typo?

The appendices contain considerable OOB information down to battalion level for various dates coinciding with large operations, although you'll have to go back into the text to pull out all the numbers needed for generating a tabletop scenario. It's a great start, though.

I also want to highlight Forczyk's minimalist use of period excerpts. Too many authors dump too many excerpts into their text, but Forczyk understands that excerpts used sparingly are excerpts used best. Historical points and analysis can be made without interruption and with far fewer words than a half-page excerpt dump.

The book contains 103 black and white photos, one color photo, nine color maps, seven color org charts, and 20 color illustrations. The tank profiles and maps seem to be taken from previous Ospreys.

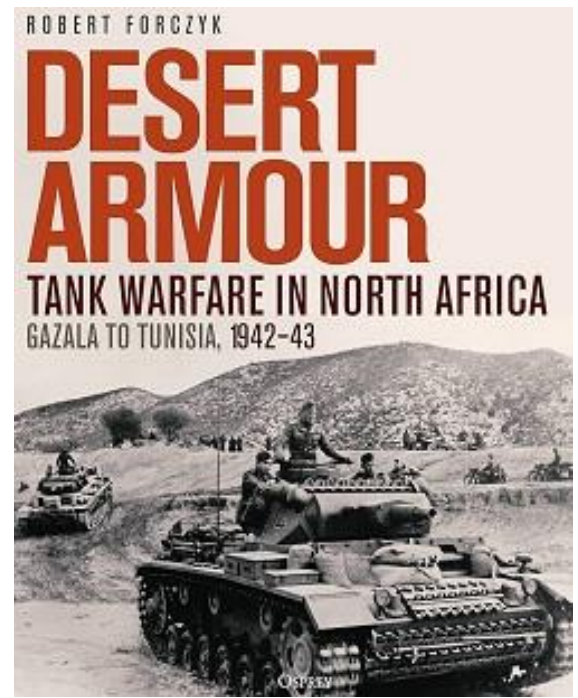
A nit: Some of the maps are far away from the text they are supposed to illustrate. For example, the Operation Aberdeen (June 5, 1942) map (p143) kicks off the Operation Lightfoot (Oct 1942) chapter. Why the Operation Supercharge (Nov 2, 1942) map (p257) is placed in the Mareth Line defense (Mar 1943) chapter is beyond me. Others stretch the location, but it would be better to locate the maps within the operations, not after or way after.

Speaking of which, I will put in a request for more maps to support authors' prose. Forczyk is a master at recounting the action, but it'd be helpful to offer visual support to the text so that all these obscure named towns, wadis, hills, and other terrain are placed in visual context.

I know, I harp on maps, but only because I want to recreate the actions -- some of which have minimal tanks - on the tabletop. That's the sort of inspiration you get when you mix attention to detail, scintillating prose, and insightful analysis.

Plenty of books cover the North African campaigns, but this Desert Armour pair are right up there at the top. Brilliant.

Enjoyed it.



**With My Shield: An Army Ranger in Somalia.** by James Lechner. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 288 pages. 2023.

A reasonable read by an earnest soldier who spent 27 years in the US Army. The highlight of the book, if not his service, was the 1993 deployment to Mogadishu (Somalia) and subsequent mission to capture the warlord Aided in the city. Those of you who saw the movie *Black Hawk Down* will recognize the scenario.

Before you get into the street-level firefight, you learn about his background and the training regimen of the Rangers. He ended up a forward observer for the company, especially calling in air support during the Aided mission.

The action comes fast and furious, including the limited knowledge about where the Somalia militants' firing positions were located. Somewhere in the middle of the firefight, a bullet splintered his shinbone. Given morphine, he was out of the fight. The firefight proved more touch and go than conventional history recorded, with a considerable number of wounded within a perimeter established after the force was cut off from extraction. A UN convoy finally reached the Ranger company the next day.

He endured multiple operations to reconstruct a 4-inch missing section of shinbone -- so successful that he was able to return to active duty in a variety of other deployments across the globe.

The book contains two black and white maps, one black and white illustration, and 16 color photos. One of the photos is an aerial view of the city section where the firefight occurred -- great for terrain. Another is of his boot in the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning.

The workmanlike prose gets the job done describing events from his perspective. You'll need other sources for an OOB to recreate the battle, but you'll get a great idea of urban combat. I've read this type of book before and it compares well with them, although I am amazed at the medical excellence at Walter Reed that repaired his leg. His determination to stay in the Army is especially commendable.

Enjoyed it.

**Argentine Perspectives on the Falklands War.** by Nick van der Bijl. Hardback (6.3x9.5 inches). 222 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Recovery and Loss of Las Malvinas*

I've read a number of British accounts of the Falklands War, but this is an Argentinian account of the campaign, based largely on the Argentinian military's Calvi Report. The Argentinian OOB gets covered in detail, with numbers in the text as well as types of weapons, vehicles, troops, warships, helicopters, and aircraft.

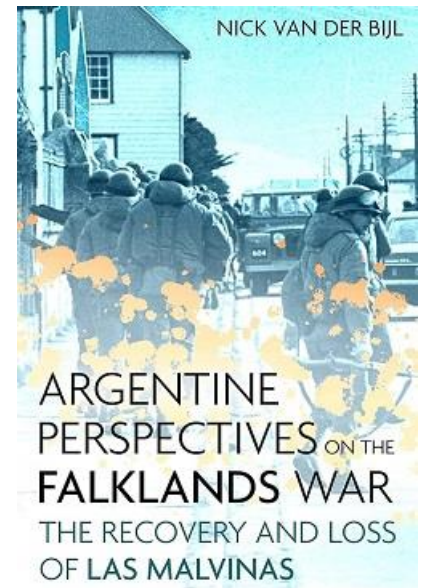
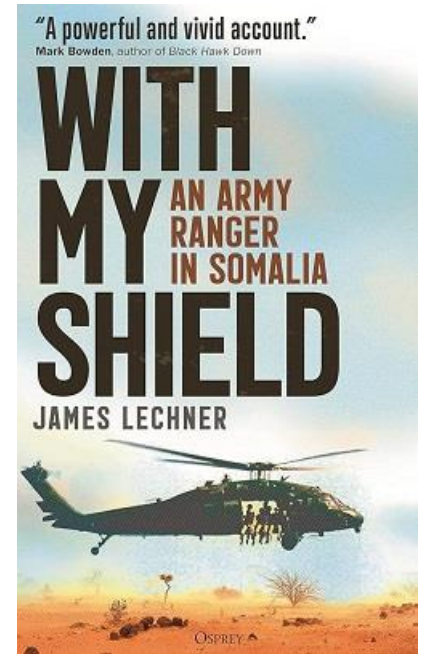
Logistics can often make or break a campaign, and desperate Argentine conscripts suffered from food shortages. Indeed, punishments included soldiers staked out on the ground and others being buried (p87). Overall, the Argentine soldiers offered a mix of morale states, with better equipment and better communications generating higher morale. And yet, according to Argentine sources, most units maintained morale as long as they were not isolated, even as they were pushed back off their defensive lines. These they abandoned only after running low on ammo. Logistics in the face of a British sea and air blockade, right?

What's interesting is the Argentine had second-generation night sights obtained from the US, better than the British first-generation night sights (p137).

The book contains 10 black and white photos, five black and white maps, and one black and white illustration.

This book offers a good counterpoint to British sources that describe the initial Argentinian occupation, defense against invading British, and final surrender of the islands. It's always good to get the other side's view of a campaign.

Enjoyed it.





**Thirteen Roman Defeats: The Disasters That Made The Legions.** by Ian Hughes. Hardback (6.4x9.4 inches). 256 pages. 2023.

The first thing to know is the author lists playing historical wargames as a spare time activity. That provides an eye for two aspects of history near and dear to my heart: maps and numbers.

Each of the battles starts with an excellent summary of the sources available, including biases and accuracy/inaccuracy of prose. The battle reconstructions build upon these summaries to include background, forces used by both sides, battlefield location and terrain, the battle itself, and consequences for the Roman Empire. A bibliography for each chapter lists internet sites for the sources -- nice touch.

In many ways, this generally follows the well-proven Osprey *Campaign* series format -- smart touch.

Some of these battles are well known: Teutoburger Wald, Carrhae, Lake Trasimene, and Caudine Forks. The other nine? Not so much, but that depends on your knowledge base of Roman history.

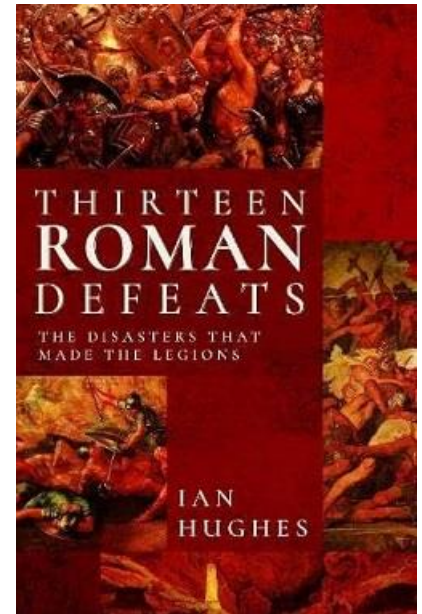
All told, the battle covered range from 387 BC/BCE (River Allia) to 468 AD/CE (Cape Bon). This provides a good overview of the evolution of the Roman Army, from beginnings, through various reforms, to heights, and to decline.

For us gamers, you can set up a reasonable approximation of the battles on the tabletop by plucking the forces from the text and using the tactical maps as a general guide. And yes, all the maps contain a scale.

The book contains 31 black and white (strategic and tactical) maps, three black and white illustrations, four black and white photos, and 16 color photos.

As you might expect, much is speculation and interpretation based on sources, academia, and archeology. All together, it's well researched, well written, and well considered. Well done.

Enjoyed it.



**Korea 1950-53. Air Campaign 39.** by Michael Napier. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *B-29s, Thunderjets and Skyraiders Fight the Strategic Bombing Campaign*

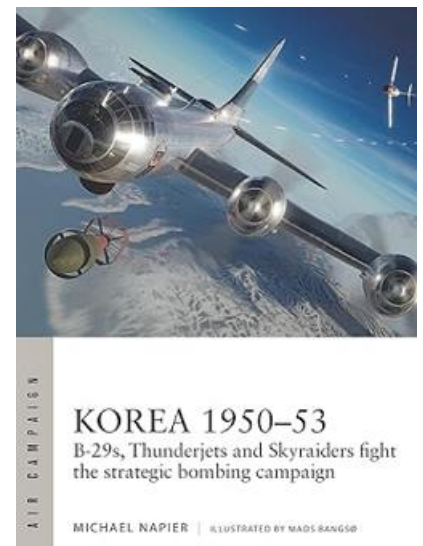
First things first: The font in the *Air Campaign* series continues to be smaller than other series' volumes. *Operation Black Buck 1982: Air Campaign 37* (see the review in the 08/23/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org) and *The Blitz 1940-41: Air Campaign 38* (review in 08/23/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org) suffer the exact same problem.

One look at the font size comparing *Putin Takes Crimea 2014: Raid 59* and this booklet is enough to show the difference. I already wear reading glasses and I read lots of books and booklets. Osprey needs to either edit the text so it fits in 96 pages, change the format to use the extra inch and a half in the margins per page that is 95% blank, or, expand the page count to 112 or even 128. Yes, the information in these booklets is good enough to justify the increase in page count for bigger fonts and increase in pricetag. Or maybe this is a ploy to encourage sales of PDFs where the reader can boost the font size on the screen. Dunno, but us grognards squint enough.

I got to page 10 before my eyes started to water. I skipped and skimmed throughout the rest of the text, reading a couple pages here and there. Apparently, the USAF ran out of strategic targets in a couple years, although they continued to hammer North Korean bridges and dams with ever increasing opposition by MiG jets and improving AA.

The booklet contains 49 black and white photos, 15 color photos, six color maps, three color two-page action illustrations, and one color illustration.

The content remains tried and true: chronology, capabilities, objectives, aerial actions, and analysis. The spot pages that I read convey the challenges of a bombing campaign in difficult terrain. I just couldn't read enough of them without contorting my face.



**Anglo-Saxon Kings and Warlords: Elite 253.** by Raffaele D'Amato and Stephen Pollington. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 64 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *AD 400-1070*

This booklet follows the usual *Elite* format, offering a deep dive into the weapons, armor, and tactics of the titled fellows, supplemented with a considerable number of museum artifact photos and the eight pages of uniform plates fit for a miniature painter.

An interesting aspect is an comparison and examination of translations from the period sources, where certain terms that seem common to Latin and old English sometimes mean different things. At times, the paucity of sources requires more interpretation than translation.

Being the big chiefs, the booklet examines military hierarchy and system of obligations and responsibilities. This also covers army sizes, which I found fascinating. Trying to uncover the size of Dark Age armies leads to all sorts of numerical manipulation.

The booklet contains four black and white photos, 13 black and white illustrations, 39 color photos, five color illustrations, and eight pages of color uniform plates (six mounted figures, 18 foot figures, and some background figures).

If interested in this topic, also see: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (see the review in the 9/27/2020 AAR or up on hmgs.org -- covers England from around 625 to 1154 in twin chronicles: the Parker chronicle to 1070 and the Laud chronicle to 1154) and the retitled *The Anglo Saxon Conquest of England* (see the review in the 09/28/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org).

From late Romans to Hastings, here's a guide for your command stands and perhaps special rules to go along with them.

Enjoyed it.

**Putin Takes Crimea 2014: Raid 59.** by Mark Galeotti. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Grey-Zone Warfare Opens the Russia-Ukraine Conflict*

Give the Russians credit. They wiggled combat troops and irregular gang-bangers into Crimea and through intimidation and chutzpah winkled the place out of Ukrainian hands. Of course, now Putin wants the entirety of Ukraine.

Ukraine showed a considerable lack of leadership and response to the entire show. On paper, Ukraine had 41,000 troops in the Crimea. Alas, only about 6,000 were trained and could be considered combat effective. Even those would have been sufficient to repel the Russians, but no direction came from Kiev, and base after base surrendered, often without firing a shot. Indeed, the Russians used the Crimean equivalent of the Hell's Angels motorcycle club for intimidation at some of the lesser objectives.

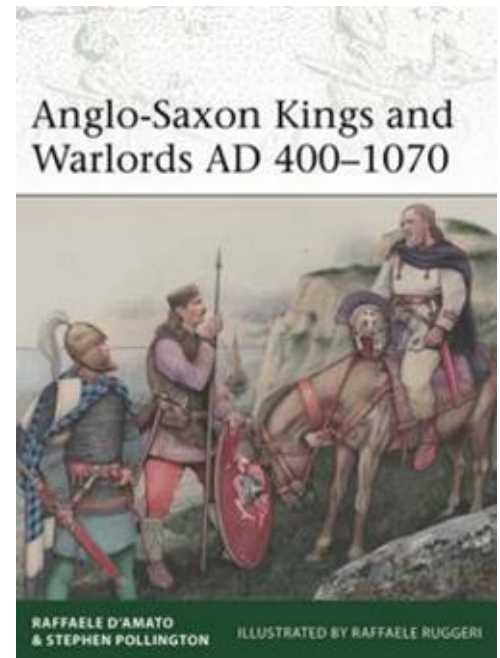
Compare that to 2022 when the Ukrainians put up a helluva fight under the steadfast leadership of President Zelinsky. After the Crimea and the DonBass region losses, the Ukrainians decided to fight.

The book details the various Russian stratagems used at the strategic and tactical level. All the interlocking efforts create a perfect storm of success, or failure, depending on your point of view. It's all quite interesting.

The booklet contains two black and white photos, 56 color photos, three color maps, three color two-page action illustrations, and one black and white illustration.

If you want to see how leadership inaction rots a government and loses a province, Crimea is a prime example. If you want to see how minimal force and minimal bloodshed captures a province, Crimea is a prime example. If you want to learn and begin to understand how it was done, here's your booklet.

Enjoyed it.





**Pacific Profiles: Volume 7.** by Michael John Claringbould. Softcover (6.9x9.8 inches). 160 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *Allied Transports: Douglas C-47 Series South and Southwest Pacific 1942-45*

Another in the series covers the C-47 transports. Squadron by Squadron, plane by plane, the aircraft receive a short history and any notable events. For example, the 69th Troop Carrier Squadron was the only transport squadron not to incur a fatality in the Southwest Pacific during WWII. Came close once, but no one died in one of its planes.

The main appeal is 100 color profiles of individual aircraft, quite often accompanied by a black and white photo. Some nose art receives a close up and 18 unit patches are also depicted in color illustrations. This is a boon to modelers, as most C-47s were painted the same overall olive drab camouflage.

A couple interesting painting points: olive drab becomes browner due to harsh tropical climate, and definitely not reddish or pink. Repairs used fresh paint, so every C-47 and R4D had a different look. Towards the end of the war, a natural finish was kept (p18). The inside of a transport in a period color photo is green zinc chromate (p134).

Besides the color illustrations with all the individual markings, the book contains 102 black and white photos, 12 color photos, two color illustrations, and three color maps. Although predominantly Army, aircraft from Australia, New Zealand, Britain, and US Marine Corps are also included.

Most interesting photo: A C-47 being salvaged from shallow water using two boats -- one under each wingtip (p74).

Enjoyed it.

**Pacific Profiles Volume 8.** by Michael John Claringbould. Softcover (6.9x9.8 inches). 124 pages. 2022.

Subtitle: *IJN Floatplanes in the South Pacific 1942-1944*

Using the same format as the other volumes in the *Pacific Profiles* series, squadron histories supplemented by color aircraft profiles offer a nifty modeler's guide to painting WWII Japanese floatplanes.

I had not realized, although it makes sense for a maritime nation, that Japan invested heavily in building floatplanes of various types: codenamed Rufe, Dave, Jake, Pete, Alf, Slim, and Glen.

The latter two types were based on submarines and were used at times. On Dec. 16, 1941, a Slim launched from submarine I-7 flew over Pearl Harbor on a recon mission (p117). On May 29, 1942, a Slim launched from submarine I-21 flew over Sydney (Australia) harbor on a recon mission (p118).

Unit by unit, the recon and fighter functions of the floatplanes are examined, complete with operational tidbits and ultimate fates. Most aircraft entries are only a sentence or two.

An unusual factoid: On Nov. 7, 1942, US ace Joe Foss was forced to exit a dogfight when the rear gunner of a Pete shot up his plane. As he flew away in his Wildcat, he noticed five deployed parachutes but no airmen. He spotted a sixth parachute with a parachutist, who unbuckled his harness to fall to his death in a suicide (p77). Kamikazes late in the war I understand, but at this point in the war, the Japanese recovered many downed airmen. Not those six apparently.

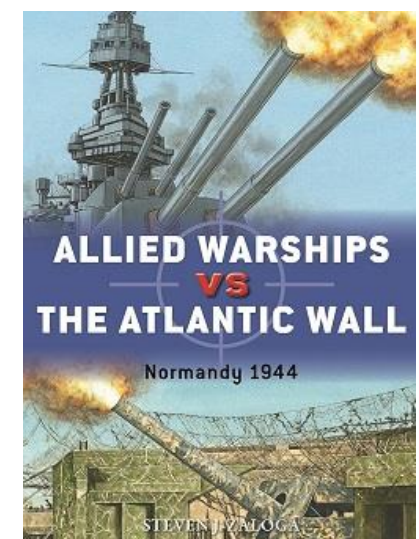
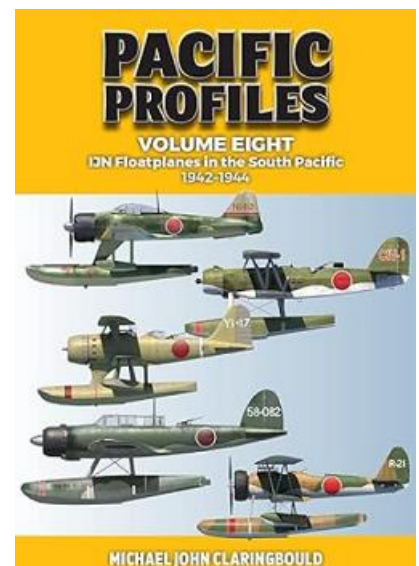
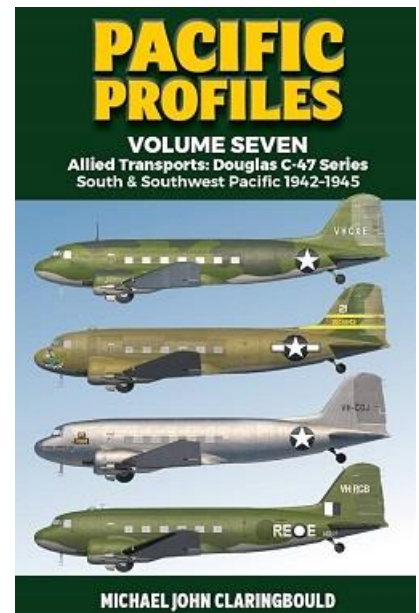
This book contains 59 black and white photos, two color photos, 76 color aircraft profiles, three color maps, and 11 other color illustrations.

Enjoyed it.

**Allied Warships vs The Atlantic Wall: Duel 128.** by Steven J Zaloga. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Normandy 1944*

Basically, this booklet covers the gunnery duel between the *USS Texas* task force and the German Battery Hamburg during D-Day. The US



bombardment eliminated one main 240mm gun out of the four -- of 493 5-inch rounds shot by US destroyers, one hit the splinter shield to kill crew and put the big gun out of action (p59). Other shots from the destroyers and from *USS Texas* and *USS Arkansas* shot up some secondary guns, but otherwise did little. Land forces ultimately captured the battery.

On the German side, the big guns shot 290 rounds, of which five actually hit -- two detonated and three did not (p66) -- for minimal damage (p75). Indeed, *USS Texas* actually put one of its own guns out of action for a bit when the guns of Turret 2 swiveled into the guns of Turret 1 (p69). Also, the *USS Texas* fired a shot over the fantail that lit the canvas covering of 40mm ammo on fire (p71). That said, the German battery did straddle the *USS Texas* several times.

The introduction to all this combat details the weaponry, fortification and battleship design, a little bit of D-Day, and some other WWII forts vs ships action.

The booklet contains 45 black and white photos, eight color photos, two color maps, six color illustrations, one color ship (*USS Texas*) profile top and side, and one color two-page action illustration.

So, a lot of expended resources, smoke, and fire for very little effect other than to help dissuade the Allies from crossing to the more heavily fortified Calais area. This should provide a bit of thought for alternate D-Day invasions.

Enjoyed it.

**White Sun War: Campaign for Taiwan.** by Mick Ryan. Softcover (6.0 inches by 9.0 inches). 340 pages. 2023.

Casemate fiction usually gets a knowledgeable person who thinks they can write a novel. In most cases, I'm sympathetic to what it takes to write a novel, so you'll often find me saying something like: "Ties got to the author."

In this case, Ryan wanted to create the equivalent of *The Killer Angels*. Not even close.

Ryan, after 35 years in the US Marine Corps, certainly knows his military and techno stuff. His speculation about artificial intelligence and autonomous warfare in the year 2028 -- the year this novel speculates China invades Taiwan -- has its moments, but as for the rest...checklist drudgery.

I can't imagine an editor even touched the prose.

For example: Ryan will introduce a technological term within the confines of the plot, and then do an info and spec dump all about that term. Often, it's between characters who should know all about it. No elegance, but the topic is checked off.

The characters are a taciturn lot -- hardly any dialogue at all. No personality. They seem superfluous to the story. I realize Tom Clancy's *The Hunt for Red October* often read like a cross between a submarine spec sheet and US/USSR Naval Operations manuals, but at least Jack Ryan had some appeal, as did Captain Ramius. Here, I can't even remember the main characters' names.

With flat prose and lack of interest in the characters, I grinded it out to page 229. Author Ryan should have written a non-fiction book based on his 35 years of defense knowledge and speculative analysis.

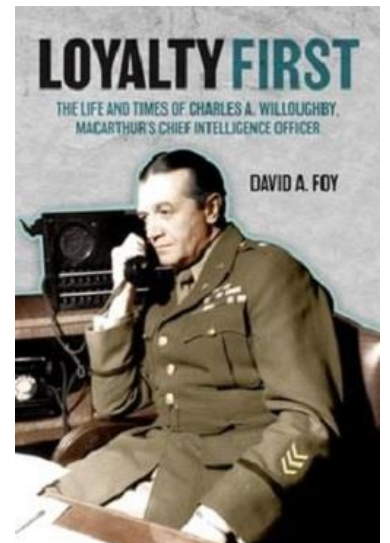
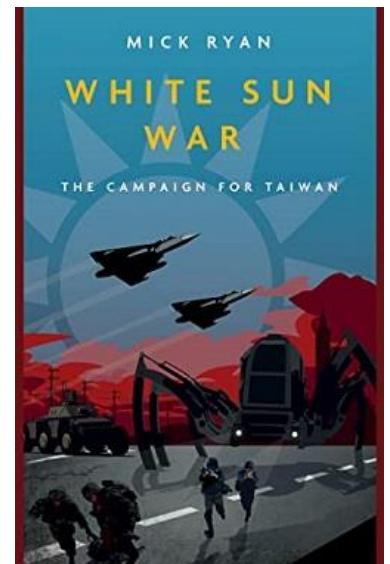
**Loyalty First.** by Daniel Foy. Hardback (6.2x9.2 inches). 278 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Life and Times of Charles A. Willoughby, MacArthur's Chief Intelligence Officer*

This bio examines a loyal, if often inept, intelligence chief of the SouthWest Pacific Area during WWII and the Korean War. He continually ignored just about all radio intercepts except those from his own group, leading him to underestimate Japanese forces and later North Korean and Chinese forces.

On occasion, he did get some estimates right -- the Hollandia operation still undercounted troops, but diminished fighting ability of the Japanese force late in the war evened out his analysis.

What he did seemingly concentrate on was a 1,200-page, three-volume history of Army operations under MacArthur: Allied Ops, Japanese Ops (interviewing 15 high-ranking Japanese officers after the war), and Occupation of Japan (p52) using up to a 100-person staff. A grand total of five copies were





printed in 1946, none of which were given to the US Army despite repeated requests. Only in 1953 was it grudgingly turned over, and the US Army produced a four-volume set that was printed only in 1966 (p238).

During the Korean War, Willoughby's estimates were even worse than WWII -- on Nov 2, 1950 saying the Chinese had 40,000 to 70,935 troops in North Korea when China had inserted about 180,000 (p136). The UN even had captured 55 Chinese prisoners prior to the unleashing of Chinese forces (p129), but he ignored such details.

This is a cautionary tale of arrogance and incompetence. In WWII, the author calculated that Willoughby had four major estimates correct and nine wrong ones (p159). It seems he had almost nothing right during the Korean War.

The book contains 16 black and white photos, seven black and white maps, and four black and white illustrations.

MacArthur trusted his completely loyal intel chief, whose underestimates also partially explains some of the delays that occurred during US offensives. That said, an interesting idea for wargaming is to feed completely inaccurate information to one side and let the planning begin.

The prose is so-so, but likely an important cautionary tale about the role of a chief intelligence officer.

Ties go to the author -- enjoyed it.

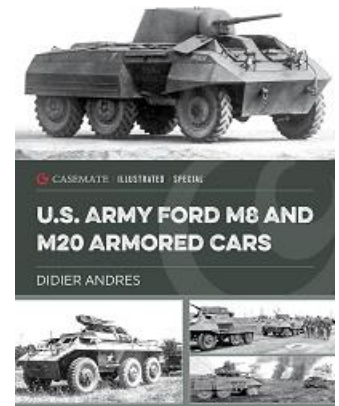
**US Army Ford M8 and M20 Armored Cars.** by Didier Andres. Hardback (8.1x10.2 inches). 160 pages. 2023.

This *Casemate Illustrated Special* offers a thorough examination of the design and development of the M8 armored car (for combat) and the M20 armored car (for command and logistics).

All the nuts and bolts of major systems receive heavy pictorial support, including modifications -- engines, crew compartments, accessories, and 37mm gun. Indeed, the specs for the main 37mm ammo is more complete for gamers than the *Casemate Illustrated Special* on 37mm gun (see the review in the 9/28/2023 AAR or up on hmgs.org).

The photos of front-line usage show a variety of stowage measures used by troops in the field, which is quite handy for modelers instead of the photos of factory-fresh vehicles.

The book contains 344 black and white photos, five black and white illustrations, and one color illustration. Enjoyed it.



**Tanks at the Iron Curtain 1975-90: New Vanguard 323.** by Steve Zaloga. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *The Ultimate Generation of Cold War Heavy Armor*

The Zaloga empire of Osprey tank booklets continues to reach into the Cold War and he brings the same level of numerical data as his WWII offerings.

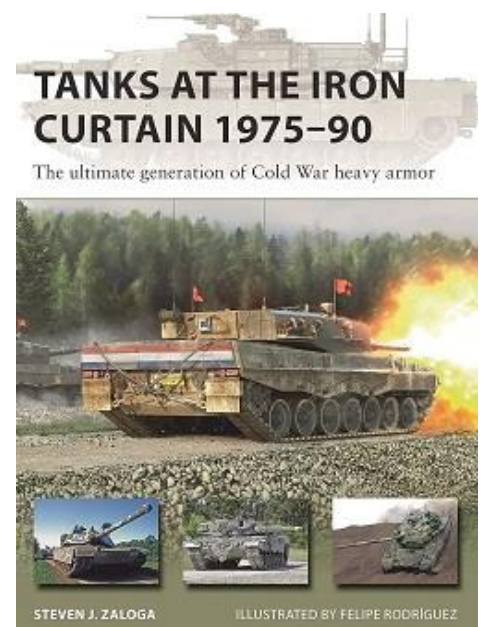
This time, it's an overview of tanks from the US (M-60 and M-1), USSR 'Triplets' (T-64, T-72, and T-80), UK (Challenger and Chieftain), Germany (Leopard), and France (Le Clerc). There's also a photo, but no text, of an Italian C1 Ariete tank (p39).

Lots of tank production charts up front and tank performance against a variety of AP rounds at the back.

The booklet contains five black and white photos, 37 color photos, one two-page color action illustration, one one-page action illustration, and 17 tank illustrations (side and top, some front and rear).

I'm not much of a modern gamer, but I have to say that reading the section about the USSR 'Triplet' tanks gave me a concise and excellent overview of the difference between them. The short take: all the variations are basically versions of the original T-64, which I thought well retired or shipped off to secondary armies. That chapter is exactly the type of explanation you want from an Osprey booklet. Excellent.

Enjoyed it.



**With Raupenschlepper Ost on the Eastern Front.** by Wilhelm Bender. Hardback (horizontal: 11.9x8.5 inches). 180 pages. 2022 reprint of 1946 book.

Subtitle: *Orel, Brjansk, Kowel, Warsaw, Danzig*

The foreword is dated September 1946 and Bender notes his "intention in this work is simple to focus on my war experience." (p2) The photos come from the Archive of Modern Conflict and include photos of him, so I believe the photos come from his personal photos albums. Certainly, the Raupenschlepper (tracked towing vehicle) figures prominently in many photos.

As for Bender, here's one lucky German soldier in an artillery battery -- he was mobilized on Aug 28, 1939 and served through the end of the war. Due to medical training, he served as a medic and later in a medical detachment before the artillery, surviving a number of encirclements on the Eastern Front during WWII. The sparse text doesn't go into much detail, but he participated in all the battles listed in the subtitle.

*Bundesarchiv\_Bild\_1011-203-1696-25*  
*Raupenschlepper\_Ost\_mit\_Kanone*

The book contains 308 black and white photos. Many fill one entire page. They are a cornucopia of front-line imagery, offering a modeler considerable options for outfitting a unit with all the non-regulation amenities. Page 90 shows an artillery gun deployed with the vehicle with trailer attached just behind in the snows of the Soviet Union. However, page 80 shows a dispersed battery -- lots of room between guns, vehicles, and ammo.



A couple typos: "from 12 October to 37 October 1939" is likely "27" not 37; and "move to Warsaw with our all of our 35 guns" needs that first "our" deleted to make sense.

According to Wikipedia: "Approximately 23,000 RSO of all versions were produced by Steyr (2,600 pcs), Klockner-Humboldt-Deutz AG (KHD; 12,500 pcs), Auto Union's Siegmars plant (former Wanderer; 5,600 pcs) and Graf & Stift (4,500 pcs)." Er...those individual numbers add up to 25,200, but close enough for Wikipedia work.

Tactical WWII games often use off-board arty, but for higher-level games, makes me want to pop such an artillery unit on the tabletop.

Enjoyed it.

**Mistress of the Waves.** by George Phillis. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 292 pages. 2012.

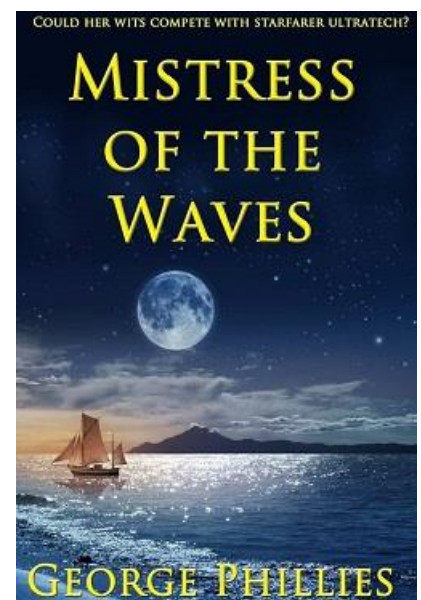
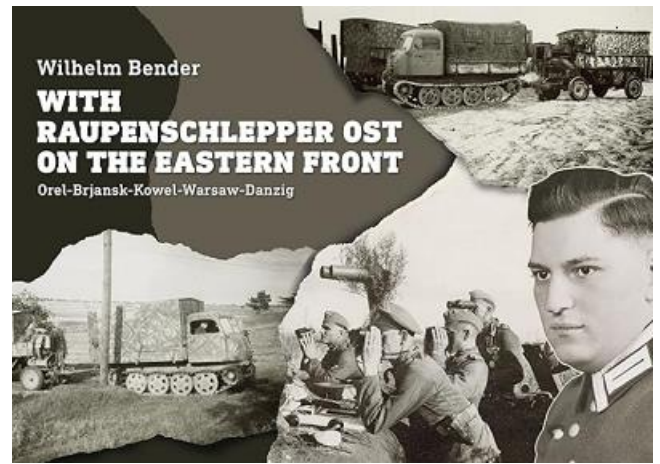
On a feudal world, local fishergal Amanda saves an offworlder from drowning and receives some high-tech medical help. And that's pretty much the extent of the science fiction in the novel. What's left is a marvelous character study of a resilient young lass who figures out capitalism in a feudal society.

Step by step, she builds a transport and retail business despite the byzantine regulations meant to hamper innovation. Cleverer than the officialdom -- and with the help of a good lawyer -- she also learns the levers of money and power to keep the authorities and rivals at bay.

There's no real individual bad guy or evil gal, but more a systemic opposition to her plans. Towards the end is another encounter with off-worlders on the lam crash-landing on the planet, contributing to her capitalist ideals.

It's well written, too -- quite a bit better than the previous novel *MinuteGirls*, which had the typical unevenness of a self-published book.

Enjoyed it.





**US Navy Gun Destroyers 1945-1988: New Vanguard 322.** by Mark Stille. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 48 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Fletcher Class to Forrest Sherman Class*

This survey of destroyers covers from the end of WWII to the end of the Cold War. It's filled with technical details, specifications, and modernizations as well as deployments and various actions, especially during the Korean War and Vietnam War. Lots of chart info about every ship in each class: Fletcher, Sumner, Gearing, and Sherman.

The booklet contains 32 black and white photos, one color photo, three color illustrations, one color two-page ship cutaway illustration (Gearing class), eight color ship profiles, and two color one-page action illustrations.

This is a handy quick reference guide for post-WWII naval buffs. Enjoyed it.

**Japanese Infantryman vs US Marine Rifleman: Combat 75.** by Gregg Adams. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Tarawa, Roi-Namur, and Eniwetok 1943-44*

As with other *Combat* volumes, this compares and contrasts two major combatants: Japanese Infantryman and USMC Rifleman. Each receives a thorough examination of equipment, training, organization, and tactics, and then discusses how they performed in the three battles of the subtitle. Note that Roi-Namur is likely better known as Kwajalein.

Each battle receives an all-important map of the operations as well as nitty gritty details of island warfare. The US improved from island to island, while Japanese doctrine and tactics changed little among the three examples.

The booklet contains 50 black and white photos, two color photos, four color uniform illustrations (front and back USMC and front and back Japanese), three color two-page action illustrations, and four color maps.

With a little OOB research for numbers, this is a ready-made guide for three Pacific island scenarios.

Enjoyed it.

**Sunderland vs U-Boat: Duel 130.** by Mark Lardas. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 80 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Bay of Biscay 1943-44*

The British four-engine flying boat flew patrols over more than the Bay of Biscay in hunting for U-boats during WWII, but the Bay battles remain the primary focus of this booklet.

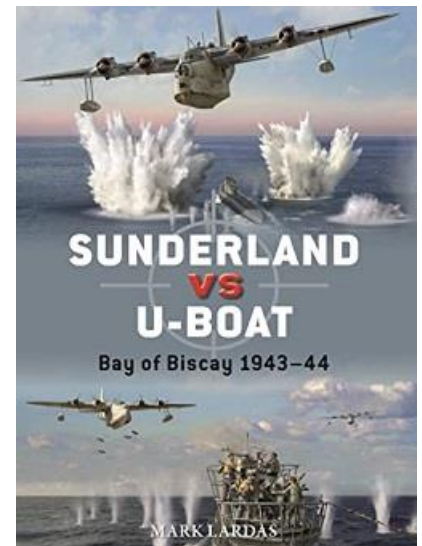
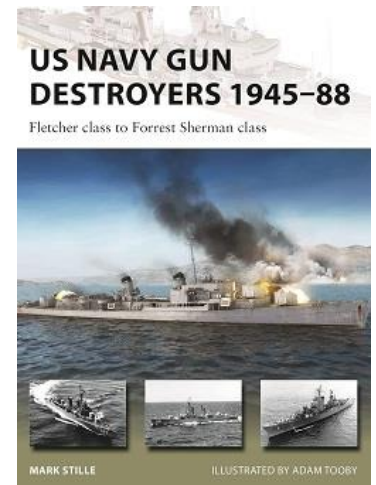
One interesting factoid: U-boat training was intended to be realistic...so realistic that 30 U-boats were lost in training accidents in the Baltic Sea (p51).

And a somewhat less-than-useful comparison factoid: The steel used in a U-boat was the equivalent to a battalion of tanks -- although what tanks (Pz IIs? Tiger IIs?) are not specified.

And an almost useless factoid (p13): "the engines canted slightly outward, rather like an eighteenth-century duckfoot pistol." This is a case of the writer trying to be far cleverer than he should be and an editor who should have known better. I can only wonder if a future Osprey would compare an 18th-century duckfoot pistol to a Sunderland.

As with other volumes in the series, design, development, and technical specs for both aircraft and submarine receive full attention, followed by an overview of the strategic situation. *Combat* examines the one-on-one battles in detail as anti-submarine warfare gradually became more effective as the Sunderland received technological upgrades. For example, the original 250-pound bombs proved almost useless except to drive the U-boat underwater, but the replacement depth charges proved effective.

Likewise, the U-boats received extra AA guns, including purpose-built flak U-boats that initially proved successful, but the type was eventually abandoned.

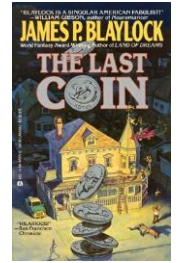


All totaled, Sunderlands sunk 24 U-boats during the war, compared to 27 sunk by Wellingtons, 40 by Catalinas, and 72 by B-24s, while U-boats shot down 93 unspecified multi-engined aircraft (p74).

The booklet contains 55 black and white photos, one black and white illustration, six color profiles, five color illustrations, one color one-page action illustration, and two color maps.

Other than a couple nits, it's a nice volume in the series.

Enjoyed it.



**The Last Coin.** by James P. Blaylock. Paperback (4.2x6.7 inches). 328 pages. 1988.

What a horrible waste of paper.

And that *is* a kind review. It's really all I wanted to say, but I believe reviewers need to explain as well as complain.

I have no idea what this book is -- I think, judging by the effusive and misguided praise on the cover, it's a comedy. It's not a thriller. It's not sci-fi. It's not a murder mystery. And it's definitely not funny.

The premise seemed promising: Someone is collecting all 30 of Judas' silver pieces, which apparently would trigger global doom if all collected in one spot. Alas, then the book veers into some guy trying to kill his wife's snoring aunt. The plot failed. The characters failed. The writing was dull. I made it to page 75 or so, skipped here and there, and abandoned it entirely on page 140.

What a horrible waste of paper.

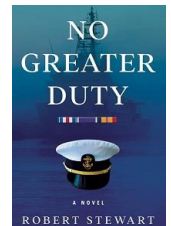
**No Greater Duty.** by Robert Stewart. Softcover (6.0x9.0 inches). 346 pages. 2022.

A novel eventually carries the two main characters -- USMC Sgt-turned officer cadet Alex Kramer and USN officer Tara Marcellus -- into the tribunal as he fights Unauthorized Absence charges.

Kramer, a Silver Star decorated Marine suffering from PTSD, leaves the Academy to save a fellow Marine from suicide. Marcellus, who had become his company officer, puts her own career on the line to help defend him.

It's a reasonable read for a debut novel by an author who has a pair of non-fiction books about the US Naval Academy and West Point. The book is mostly one big flashback, with a prologue that starts with a tribunal and then fills in all the combat and personnel harassment that occurs during deployments prior to the hearing. Then there are flashbacks inserted afterwards, which are a tad jarring to the plot.

Ties go to the author. Enjoyed it.



**Operation Ro-Go 1943: Air Campaign 41.** by Michael John Claringbould. Softcover (7.25x9.75 inches). 96 pages. 2023.

Subtitle: *Japanese Air Power Tackles the Bougainville Landings*

I've extolled the virtues of Claringbould books covering the WWII Pacific Theater air campaigns with vigorous research into US and Japanese archives, plus his illustrated *Pacific Profiles* series that covers squadrons down to individual aircraft. So, here's an Osprey *Campaign* series booklet covering Ro-Go, which slowly destroyed Japanese air power in the Rabaul area.

The usual format discusses each side's aerial strengths and weaknesses against the background of the US invasion of Bougainville, actions within the campaign timeline, and analysis of the results.

Per usual, Claringbould references archives to dispel the outrageous claims of both sides -- both in aircraft shot down and ships sunk. Raids went back and forth in small penny packets and in large coordinated strikes. Weather played a factor in scouting and during strikes. At times, the Japanese would come out on top in the aerial duels, but results generally disappointed the Japanese.

The Japanese even collected a task force of cruisers and destroyers at Rabaul to sail out and sink the US invasion force, but US aircraft struck the warships first. Although no Japanese ships were sunk, all but one were damaged, at least three requiring drydock time, and the sea operation was called off. Nifty what-if scenario there.

The booklet contains 66 black and white photos, one color photo, three color two-page action illustration, and eight color maps.

The booklet also contains the usual *Air Campaign* small font format that makes squinting mandatory. Claringbould makes the squinting worth it, but I will keep harping on said teeny fonts until Osprey production execs wise up. I don't blame PDQ Digital Media Solutions -- they are probably only following orders -- but change the format so us grognards, who I suspect are the main purchasers of the booklets, can enjoy the battle, not battle the fonts. Sigh. Enjoyed it, albeit with varying degrees of eye-strain.

