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# An Independent Journal of ASL® Thoughts and Ideas

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## Prep Fires

*Your Editor, Jon Halfin*

A Happy New Year to all and hopes that the holidays found some exciting new ASL gear "Under the Noel Trees" for everyone! (*to quote a favorite scene title of mine!*)

Our E zine is available online at Game Squad Forum free of charge in their download section for ASL, or at the SVASL Club Yahoo Group Website, free of charge. I have given permission to both ASL WebDexWiki, and Advanced Squad Leader . net to offer issues available for download free of charge also, at their leisure, as well as asking them to update their status, as this is once again an active publication.

As before, the main focus of the articles of this publication is to explore the units and battles behind our cardboard heroes, in the hopes that some of these "forgotten battles" may yet see coverage in the ASL design arena. This does not by any means define that we will not publish variants or tactical or strategic

tips for ASL play. In fact, any articles are welcome for submission.

We Begin the New Year with a look at one of the first efforts of the Lutwaffe's Special Detachments in April of 1940, in the assault on Norway, and a most extraordinary feat that earned the intrepid aircrew of a ME-110c the first Knights Cross of the Norway campaign. Pushing onward, and continuing our Back to the Basics articles, we will look in depth at the ideas behind planning the attack and keeping pace with a turn record, in the hopes that such tidbits may assist our newer players in finding the "groove" that ASL has for an attacker in a scenario. Pacing the assault is an essential element in finding victory. With the possibility of a "Game Day in the Delta" being attended by some of our Club, I will begin the appropriate planning for this event, tentatively scheduled for Saturday, July 2nd, 2011. Finally, we enter into Trivia Contest #2!



## Bounding Fire

SVASL Club Tournament Information and "Official" posting thereof:

The SVASL Club, and this editor, will be hosting a "Game Day in the Delta" ASL Mini-Tournament on Saturday, July 2nd, 2011. The format will consist of 2 rounds, with initial seeding by randomly drawn card matching. Any odd man out will face a moderator in the initial matching. All entrants must arrive for sign in by no later than 9:00am, on Saturday morning to participate for the prizes. The entry fee of \$3.00 per participant will be paid by all entrants prior to the

end of the tournament Saturday evening. There will be a “lunch” break provided for all entrants and moderators between the 2 rounds. Rounds will have scenarios featuring unusual matches of nationalities and terrain, to test the entrant’s skill with the various rules therein. Each scenario will be provided to the entrant’s 10 minutes before each round begins, for their initial review and a brief Q and A for any questions prior to setup. Each defender will be allotted 15 minutes to set up their defense, each attacker will be allotted 15 minutes to plan their assault and set up, and then the play will commence for each round. Scoring for this tournament will be based on victory points earned per the VC’s of the scenarios. Second Round seeding will be based on matching the best scoring attackers with the best scoring defenders from Round 1, and reversing the roles. The player with the most recorded victory points at the end of the day will take home the Tournament Trophy. A 7+2 “booby” prize will be awarded to the player who rolls the most 6,6 DR’s in the 2nd round games, in partial compensation for being the “lousy luck” candidate. In all instances, the Moderators will not be eligible to win a prize. You do not need to be a member of the SVASL Club to enter; just a player of ASL and this tourney is open to all ASL fanatics. Attendees can find the Tournament Info Pack and Map / Driving Directions page as well as contact phone #s for the moderators on Tourney Day available for free download from Game Squad Forum and the SVASL Club site on Yahoo Groups. It will be posted in both locations on April 30th, 2011. Attendees will need to bring their entry fees, copies of ASL counters for Italians, Japanese, British, Russian, and Chinese forces. No other nationalities will be used during the tourney. If anyone is interested in assisting as a moderator, please contact me at my e-mail address prior to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011.



## Playtesting:

Playtesting certainly isn’t an ASL calling for every player. Working through rules questions, typo errors on scenario cards, and ambiguous SSR’s can be a real headache at times for those who journey forth into the nether regions of uncharted ASL territory. There are unquestionable benefits to be gained as well, and these act as an irresistible allure to those entering playtester ranks of every new ASL product. The “bennies” range from first looks at all the cool new ASL stuff before deciding to buy it (test drives, as it were.), and experience in playing a completely new set of opponents, which opens up even more doors to more ASL games.

The most important thing to remember if you have ever considered being a “playtester” is that it is a more “absolute” commitment that you will finish a playing or two of those scenarios, difficulties and all, without conceding prior to the end. You don’t need to be a “rules lawyer” to playtest.

You do need to have some firm grasps of the basics of ASL play, generally speaking the ideas down pat as they apply to: skulking, VBM Freeze, FTR rules, OBA use, etc.

I recently volunteered as a playtester for Fanatic Enterprises, and have finished 1 and am playing a second scenario as a playtester. My final decision to commit to such an enterprise came down to my belief in the absolute truism of the immortal words of ASL player Matt Shostak: “ You only get out of ASL what you are willing to put into ASL.”

This newsletter is the ultimate example of this philosophy for me. I get out of ASL what I am putting into it.

If playtesting sounds like an avenue for your ASL explorations, look to Game Squad Forum for playtest announcements and volunteer to help bring forth the next great ASL product!



## Taking the field:

*(What one well-trained pilot can accomplish if given the chance!)*

April 1940. The German High Command has set forth the timetable of attacks that will dismember the planned Allied moves into Norway and seize the far northern battlefronts for the Reich. With overwhelming support from the Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe, the landers of the 7th Flieger Division and Wehrmacht troops embarked for assault

will be thrust onto Norwegian soil. Among the ambitious plans are amphibious assaults, Airdrops, Coups de Main by Glider borne forces and massive naval bombardments. Each of these events will strike out at key centers of Air and naval traffic in Norway, and will finally paralyze the ability of Allied forces to respond. Among the targets designated for airborne assault that fateful day in April was the Norwegian Air Base located on the Sola peninsula. This key southern runway and its assigned Dive-Bomber Squadron represented a real threat to any naval traffic around the southwestern tip of Norway. The initial Wermacht plans included an operation that would drop 2 companies of paratroops into the airfield compound several minutes after a full squadron of ME -110 Zerstorer fighters had conducted a dive-bombing raid. The paratroops were to seize the runway itself, and provide cover for 3 JU-52 transports to bring in additional troops of the 22nd Luftland Division with heavy weapons, that would assist the paratroopers in holding the base until relieved by assaulting troops coming in through the port of Sola after being landed by destroyer.

In war of course, nothing goes as planned, and no plan ever survives first contact with the enemy. The pre-dawn hours saw fierce winds and snow flurries at ground level around Sola and its airfield. As the Me-110 raid commenced, most of the target areas were obscured and only a few airplanes were able to penetrate the weather and actually attack the field. Instead of eliminating the anti - aircraft batteries, they only succeeded in awakening them to a pending attack. The paratroop drop never found the target area, and the 2 companies from the 7th Flieger Division returned to their staging airfields having never dropped onto Norwegian soil. The JU-52s took off unknowingly, with a 3-plane escort of ME-110 fighters, and headed into the grey morning. As they approached the airfield, the heavy AA

fire served ample notice that the defenses were still intact. Undaunted, the commander of the ME0110 escorts ordered the transports to stay in the clouds, and ordered his flight into strafing runs on the AA defenses. They succeeded in knocking out most of the firing guns, at the loss of one of the fighters. As Lt. Henschel's fighter bottomed out from a last strafing run, AAMG fire ripped into his plane and shredded the rudder controls. He calmly lined the plane up with the runways, and lowered the landing gear, executing a very nice limited stick landing with all guns on the fighter blazing down the runway until he ran out of ammo for the wing - mounted weapons. Yelling at the gunner in the back seat to continue to fire at the end of the runway, he grabbed his kit, containing a .32 cal pistol and 1 hand grenade, and jumped out of the plane running for the tower building. The airfield defenses focused on the landed fighter still shooting at them and Lt Henschel made the doorway, gunning down the soldier guarding the door. Reloading with his second clip, he rolled the grenade into the room, waited for the detonation, and then entered ready to fire at any resistance. Lt Henschel had just succeeded in seizing the Control Room and its radios single-handed, as the surviving Norwegian Air Force personnel were too wounded and dazed from the grenade blast to fight back. Locking himself in, he ordered the radio to transmit landing instructions to the circling transports. The JU-52s landed and rapidly disgorged the heavily armed landsers from the 22nd Luftland Division, who rapidly ended all resistance at the airfield. This small force held the field until troops landed at Sola port arrived the following evening. For his heroism and fast action, Lt Henschel would become the first Luftwaffe recipient of the Knights Cross during the Norway campaign.



## Back to the Basics:

### *Attacking in ASL*

You've been handed the mission of securing an objective in a timely manner by higher authority (or at least by the dice roll that chose you as the attacker for this scenario). You've been given the troops and weapons, as well as some support groups, in order to accomplish your mission. Will you achieve success?

Many beginning ASL players avoid becoming scenario attackers simply to bypass the myriad requirements a successful assault will require. It is after all, much easier to defend against an attack, especially in the light of the uncanny knowledge of your opponent's objectives.

Good attack strategy must contain key elements, including a timetable, reserves, terrain analysis, equipment distribution, and expected use of supporting arms. Certainly you may just get lucky by "winging it" and assaulting an objective without lining up these key elements beforehand, but the odds will lie with the astute commander who takes the requisite action to achieve a good plan of attack.

Let's start at the beginning: analyzing your orders. What are the VCs of the scenario? Do they require the survival or exit of certain unit(s) in your OoB? Do they require possession of certain areas of the board? Do they require destruction of enemy forces in the area (CVPs)? A clear idea of what it is you are trying to accomplish in a scenario is the first key to victory. (For me, I find writing a side note for myself with the VC's in shorthand is a great tool. I am constantly reminded of my ultimate

goals, every time I look to my side of the table.)

Next come the analysis of the terrain. Do you enter from a map edge or start onboard? How far does your objective lie from your initial starting point? Will you be required to advance through restricting terrain such as forests or villages / towns? Will you be required to seize hills or high ground to advance? Consider that the dense forest may offer good cover and concealment, but it will also result in a slower advance than the orchard field or kunai.

There are 2 important items concerning terrain in the attack. #1. Is there a route of advance that offers cover and concealment while allowing you to reach the victory areas before the last game turn? #2) Are there any "Choke Points" or funnels in the terrain that will provide good locations for enemy fire to slow down your advance, such a bridge over a gully, or a road through a forest? Finding these 2 items will differentiate you from an unskilled newbie to a possible threat as an opponent.

Equipment and supporting arms come next. You were given AFV(s) for a reason, and the scenario designer gave you OBA or an air strike with the intention it be used. Supporting arms and mobile equipment such as tanks both offer the same benefit to an attacker, that is the ability to create artificial cover for advancing infantry so that they can avoid the dreaded FFMO penalty. Even a HE OBA results in LOS hindrances, AFVs certainly do, even those unarmed trucks offer +1 cover for units behind them, even if they become wrecks.

The second item in this category is your special ammo, most importantly SMOKE / WP capability. S# ammo, vehicular dispensers, and smoke grenades all provide the same item as above, artificial cover to allow advances across OG without the FFMO penalty.

Now we come to a very difficult item to master, and one that divides most ASL players on their opinions of how to attack in any given scenario. Reserves.

Generally speaking, you should strive to meet the same requirements that German, Russian, and American troops found were necessary for sustained advance in mobile combined arms warfare setting. This is the famous standby phrase "2 up, 1 back". By holding back a portion of your forces from the initial assault, you now have the capability to maintain a crucial line of advance, to reinforce successful ventures into enemy territory, and to even change the direction of the line of advance mid game. By holding back your reserves, you force a defender to do likewise.

On a purely tactical level, consider the situation of an HS in a ground level bldg. with a DC, facing an HS with a MMG in an adjacent building. By holding off the movement of the DC unit, you force the MG team to decide if they should fire at other units, leaving themselves open to a devastating 30FP attack, or should they let the other units waltz by in order to defend against the DC? Now instead of a DC at 1 hex range how about we make it a FT at 2 hex range that holds off its move. Almost every ASL player will dread the FT, as it gets to ignore both TEM and adv. fire penalties. This is a simplified tactical example of the use of reserves on the attack.

More importantly, you will need to think strategically also, preserving part of your force till mid game, in order to influence the defender to choose whether to react to the newly advancing units or continue to fire at the closer but now battle damaged units you began your assault with. A good rule of thumb is the 60,30,10 split. 60% of your force goes for a "schwerepunkt" a direct assault through terrain offering the best speed of advance and cover with supporting arms assisting this drive,

30% of your force pushing against the enemy from a different direction, gearing towards moving into the victory areas, forcing the defenders to split their fire, and 10% held in an area that is out of immediate LOS of enemy units, but close enough to the action to reinforce either assault.

The last item in the "reserve" category is establishing good rally points; areas clear of enemy LOS, with a leader available, to quickly rally broken forces back into the fight. You should strive to have at least 1 of these for each drive into the enemy held area.

Now we get to the last item to consider, time. You must determine at what speed your units will need to advance to reach the victory areas before the last game turn. Why this 1 GT buffer is necessary has been cited before, and will be again. No plan will ever survive first contact with the enemy. ASL is a game of DRs, the great moderator being luck. That good (or terrible) DR at a critical juncture can sidetrack even the best-laid plan of attack. You will need a buffer space to regroup and finish your objectives. This often leads attackers to be forced into the "move, not shoot" mentality of forgoing prep fires to maintain the advance. The better method is to use supporting arms or kill stacks to "overwatch" the advance, with the overwatch units prep firing, and the maneuver units advance firing. The Best of both worlds is a timetable allowing you to "leapfrog" these 2 elements, switching back and forth, but this is rarely the case in the sharp and intense firefights of ASL.

A good attacker will combine all of these basic elements of attack into a solid plan that will be flexible enough to respond to any enemy activity, and rigid enough to force the enemy to choose whether to respond by fire or wait it out.



## Defensive Fires:

### *Letters to the Editor*

### *Opponents wanted:*

Seeking VASL PBEM opponents for just about anything. .... I prefer IFT. Please e-mail me at [witchbottles@gmail.com](mailto:witchbottles@gmail.com) if you are interested.

## 2nd ASL Trivia Contest!

Ok, for all of you "Expert" ASL player, here is the ASL Trivia Challenge #2. You will be playing for bragging rights and your name published in the next Point Blank! As the winner. All entries must have the question #, followed by the answer, as a minimum. The answers must also be clearly labeled with your

name as you may wish to see it published, and the Point Blank! issue #. Here we go:

### FKAC

1. What caliber was the Boys ATR round? What was special about this cartridge design?

### CoB

2. What unusual terrain feature made Rangoon, Burma indefensible?
3. What were the NKL's?
4. What was the most unusual feature of the standard firearm issued to IJA officers in WW2?

### Yanks

5. What was the nickname given to the Sherman tank variant mounting 100MM rocket racks on the turret in a MRL mount?
6. What reward did Sgt. Cullen earn for his unique design to penetrate hedgerows?

All entries are final. All answers can be found in historical research of the ASL modules cited.

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