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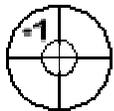
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Prep Fires

Your Editor, Jon Halfin

Summer has ended, and with it the end of summer tournaments here in the Bay area for ASL, along with the nationwide "wolfing" on the Forums, as the ASLrs geared up for ASLOK, which has just concluded.

We bring you the after action info from our "out on the Left coast" ASL from Labor Day Weekend, and then we are

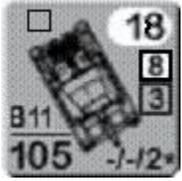
going to explore the most basic of concepts, "How am I supposed to kill that Panther with THIS tank!", syndrome, otherwise known as Shermans v Panthers, and how to return with at least some of your Shermans alive. I will preface this with the comment anyone interested in good, sound tactical advice on how to kill kitty kats with eggshells, should read Rodney Kinney's excellent "Panther gegen Sherman" article. I humbly submit my views on this subject, and perhaps defer to Mr Kinney as a prior "master" of the ways to the end of the tunnel for the Shermans.

Our AAR is a new item here, from a play tested version of a scenario from Vic Provost's "Dispatches" just released, and our thoughts on how the play test in general, and the Bedouin Blitz, specifically, went for us in a "modified" DTO scenario. Special thanks to Andrew Kerekes, my play test opponent for his comments therein.

With rather sad news of a few very nicely equipped Hobby / Gaming stores going out of business around the U.S.; I felt a "plea" of support is necessary, so I address the "why should I spend my hard earned ASL dollars THERE?" question.

Last, but not least, for lack of a better term, I'll call them the "FTF" crowd. (and vis a vis the VASL crowd, also, to be fair.) There are some finite lines as to where you may lay in the "Is VASL a good way to play ASL" debate. I want to thank our own Steve Bowen of NorCal ASL Group for his comments herein.

As of this writing, we are still waiting with primed Credit Cards and mouse clicking fingers, to pre-order the FB HASL module from MMP. We want our Hungarians!!!!



(My new GS Forum Avatar, for those who may not have noticed ...)

Bounding Fire

We were blessed with 2 separate registered ASL events for Labor Day Weekend at the Santa Clara Marriott here in the Bay area, and special thanks to our SVASL and Nor Cal Club members for attending and sponsoring these ASL ftf tourneys during what was otherwise a very busy summer for most of us.

Saturday saw an ASL Open end event for Nor Cal ASL Club “bragging rights”, and a chance to put down some cardboard boddy bags with that guy you wanted to play for a while. Dennis Donovan scheduled the play area, and coordinated for the setup and start times for an “open draft”. The only rules for the event, you had to be there to play, you had to decide on a scen from ASL, and you had to play ASL. We have had some “friction” in the NorCal ASL group the last summer, as some of our gamers have “migrated” their interests into exploring some of the newer releases from other gaming companies. I have personally purchased some very nice air combat games from GMT, (Downtown and Elusive Victory), and they appear to be “ASL in the 60s to 70s jet combat age” with their intricacies. I’d not prefer to take them to a scheduled ASL game day, but I can certainly sympathize with those who do, spending a few bucks on what appears to be a great wargame still supports our hobby, and getting the chance to “show if off” is one of the points we will be making our FTF or VASL article in this issue. The ASL play was friendly, fun, and enjoyable for all attendees, and a

great warm up for the Sunday “main event”.

Sunday saw the SVASL Club -sponsored ASL 1 day Tourney , directed again by our own Mike Rhodes, who we all must thank profusely for his continued efforts in establishing and coordinating these things!

Everyone here at the NorCal ASL group wants to thank Gary Tanner for taking the decision to go from ASLSK to full ASL. We all know the significant investment made simply in acquiring the ASLRBv2 and BVv3 to play, and I would like to ask everyone to help Gary get an opponent when he comes to the Game Days. Steve Bowen and Dennis Donovan have taken Gary “under wing” to get through some of the more difficult concepts of the ASLRB. I’d like to remind everyone this is EXACTLY what the “Dogs” of some of those very unbalanced ASL scenarios out there are REALLY good for. You can take the “underdog” side and give the new guy the side favored at 70% + , and still have a very challenging game of ASL with a newcomer, and they get to see all the “neat” toys usually featured in such unbalanced creations (King Tigers, Goliaths, JSII’s, Pershings, etc.) Next time you see Gary, welcome him to the ASL fold.

There have been several threads about “How can we establish an ASL Benevolent Society” for those ASL players who lose their entire collections, as well as very much more ,through natural disasters. Having been the victim of this previously myself, I would like to simply point out some “tips” on how to help, if you are feeling the desire to be “ASL generous.”
#1) Immediately after a disaster such as house fire, ASL is really the farthest thing from your mind, and someone may be rather taken aback by offers to replace his ASL kit, when what he needs right now is a roof over his head and clothes for his family. It took me

more than 2 years to reach a point where I even considered re entering the ASL gaming scene after our house burnt to the ground in 1996. Please do not be offended if you receive a “brusque” remark from someone after offering ASL related help soon after such a life changing event.

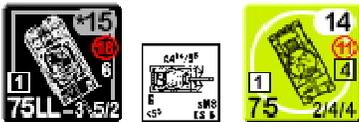
#2) We should be able to rather easily coordinate the transfer of funds via PayPal from the donors to those who have ASL products they are willing to sacrifice at less than “E-Bay” prices to the greater good of someone in need, so that everyone benefits, the supplier of the out of print item getting a reasonable price for their item, and the player in need getting what he needs to return to ASL. I firmly believe this is easily coordinated in an informal manner between those who need the assistance, and those willing to donate.

#3) The most important thing to remember in such occurrences is that the ASL player and their family are safe and well. Beyond that, give some time and help in other places if you can and desire to, and ASL related help when they are ready for it. Our best wishes here in the Bay and Valley go to our ASL brethren in Texas and the East Coast , who have recently lost their entire lives in their house destructions from the fires and Hurricane.

#4) Donating for the ASL greater good, is the epitome of why this is THE hobby, of the THE GREATEST game ever published. Whether it be your time donated to play test new ASL gear for everyone to enjoy, your efforts and considerable work to design a new ASL product, your patience and understanding as you work a ASL noob into the fold as volunteer “ teacher”, your provision of ASL “extras” laying around to help replace what others have lost due to no fault of their own, your donation for shipping or cost charges to allow someone to acquire an irreplaceable item for their ASL kit, moderating and running the ASL

Forums, coordinating the tourney events around the world for ASL. Writing about ASL for other players' enjoyment. All of these embody the spirit of Matt Shostak's words" you will get from ASL what you are willing to put into ASL." If you have the time to commit to any ASL related events over and above simply buying and playing, consider it an investment well worth your time and effort.

Without further ado, we put the "ASL preacher's" soapbox to rest for this issue!



Back to the Basics:

Sherman vs. Panther, or How am I gonna kill THAT with THIS?!

(A primer on the basics of how to defeat a Panther with Shermans)

Rather than attempt to re-hash some of the very well written articles by Bruce Bakken, Eric Baker, and Rodney Kinney, to name but a few, on the intricacies of the "Dance of Death" I felt it rather more beneficial to examine this question more in the light of the "New approachee". That player who, deciding to actually try out a heavy metal scenario with the big kats in play, for the very first time, is now faced with the rather daunting prospects of how to deal with said Panther or Tiger, preferably only one, but many times more than 1.

To This end, there are some rather "basic" ground rules an Allied commander has when facing the "zoo".

Among the various useful items to remember are the following that really make the meat to the argument of invalidating the board position of such a powerful piece as a Panther G. They are, in no particular order of importance: SMOKE; HE; and the effects of the Chapter H vehicle notes for the Sherman, citing the 2 major effects of a ROF # printed on a white background.

Obviously, the preference for any savvy American combined arms commander to use the plethora of smoke generating devices at his disposal is to target such units first and often. By restricting the ability of a 75LL gun to hit what it is shooting at with multiple LOS Hindrances, you can quickly negate what would otherwise be "prime real estate" that said Panther has occupied with long LOSs and good open terrain to the front. (Be sure, your savvy German commander WILL always seek out such wonderful spots for his heavy armor, it goes without saying.). So you should consider targeting not only the tank's location with SMOKE, but also lots of locations along the LOS lines from that big tank on the hill. In doing so, you will ease the ability to bypass the big thing entirely, or at least force it out of that really good position it was in so it can get decent fire odds.

Secondly, and I believe this one is often overlooked by many ASL players, is ATT HE vs. armor. The US mtrs come in a very nice 60mm dose, and many lighter versions of American armor mount HE guns capable of ATT firing or even the ubiquitous 81mm MTR. That poor little 57mm AT Gun will bounce as many rounds as a 75 will off the glacia plates of the Panthers. That same 3 ROF 81* MTR can cripple that Panther pretty quickly, especially with the 3 ROF, and even has a better than zero chance of outright killing the thing, especially if it set up in a woods hex. Never underestimate the power of ATT HE vs. any Armor you are facing, even a 50mm Mtrs SW has a better than zero chance of doing damage to light and

medium armor. If you are a Sherman, always ask why should I "NOT" fire ATT HE instead of an AP D/I attempt (the odds are significantly better with an ATT HE round) if engaging at long range after the SMOKE is out.

Last are the effects of the white background ROF #. This little tidbit, and the vehicle note that accompanies it , gives the Sherman back some teeth. Now, if we can get the SMOKE out, put a couple of HE capable weapons on fire overwatch, we can then maneuver a Sherman or two to Point Blank range, and initiate a Gun Duel at that nice, Slow Turret, the real killer of the Panther or Tiger. Woe be unto the Panther holding a crossroads in tight terrain with SMOKE to the front and Shermans to the sides.

Mastering the combined arms "dance" is tricky, and I'll be the first to say I've got it wrong more than I've got it right, but when you get the tempo and rules down, lay the SMOKE, get the HE firing to threaten movement of the big kitty kats, and then pour on the throttle and zoom in with a pair of Shermans, you can certainly make any Panther commander wonder if he'll need new nappies when the shooting is all over.



AAR#5 Bedouin Blitz, before and After

Play testing is an honor one can do for your fellow ASLrs. If you have a good grasp of the basics, you can run a decent game of a new scenario, and provide useful input that the developers will then be able to use to make the final changes needed to create that new "classic" scenario.

We recently had the privilege of assisting that incredible "Bunker Crew" in the last issue scenario Bedouin Blitz play testing. Let me say it is a pleasure to work with Vic Provost and Tom Morin, and the bunker guys. They have become a nice place to drop by for a virtual "chat" about ASL items in general on their ListServ at Yahoo Groups.

This scenario depicted a poorly positioned and outnumbered British "housekeeping" force, about to be overwhelmed while giving off an underwhelming defense of their base camp at the local Oasis. The benefit of having 2 highly mobile ACs is far offset by the absolute lack of this newer wider board having any long LOS terrain areas to position them in, and the massive number of Iraqi troops that were all set to rush the hated Brits out of their camp.

With our initial review of the PT version, we noted the SSR modified Palm Trees were not completely delineated, and we decided to play them as PTO Palms, with the SSR added benefits of being Rally Terrain, and having a + TEM. Then onto the setup. AS the Brit commander, I decided with this small force, 2 covered approaches for the Iraqis, and no really good LOSs for defensive fires, that the best defense was going to be a good offense. This worked in my favor, as the scen comes with a 2.5 GT Sudden Death VC against the Brits if things go too badly at first.

The Iraqis went as predicted, into the Palms. The ACs acted as OVR/ PBF cover along that street, and the brit troops in the houses Assault moved and advanced into melee / CC all along the main street on T2b. This forced many melees to occur, as I could control at least the odds, and in the streets and palms, there was no ambush possible. With most of his at start force in melee on T3a, Andrew, my opponent, could not muster enough to meet the sudden death VC requirements.

All this spelled the death knell for my troops, however, as now scattered, and with some casualties, here came the cavalry, and LOTS of it! The ACs died in the melees, and now the cavalry charges got many of the brit melee survivors and let to too many losses to prevent losing that entire flank of buildings in the encampment.

The Trucks arrived to evac the base at the last minute, and a heroic stand by a heroic 8-0 turned 8-1 turned wounded 9-1 leader manning a LMG almost provided the impetus to put the Brits back in the game, but a nice LMG shot by the Iraqis wrecked a truck, and the bailout DR for the passenger HS was the double break we all dread, causing the CR to Elim result to incur. The last truck could not reach the surviving HS, so it was a non contest, and the Brits surrendered their base at the beginning of the last Iraqi Turn.

When we reported the results of the game, it was interesting to see that many of the ACs had died the same way, and there were a few changes made in the end to this scen, from reducing the heavy numerical advantage to modifying the palm tree SSR to add clarification, to modifying the ACs themselves to make their AAMGs a bit more deadly, with 360 mounts.

All in all a challenging small scen that deserves a place on the "starting to learn

desert rules" list with only a few DTO rules in play.

And now from my opponent:

Beta Testing a Noob

A while back I had the wonderful opportunity to test out a new scenario developed by those great guys at Dispatches From The Bunker. The scenario in question, Bedouin Blitz. An interesting scenario with the superior British troops but low in number almost surrounded and attacked by inferior troops but lots of them. Armed with only trucks and armoured cars the British have to fight the attack off early avoiding one victory condition of the Bedouin capturing so many buildings before turn 4 then if they can do that, keep their CVP down while inflicting more on the enemy as well as exiting units of the board.

This was a great privilege as it allowed a noob like me to give feedback on a scenario that would later be printed and played by other players around the world (also a cool feeling to think you are part of only a handful of players to be the first to play this!). At the same time it's not an easy task, after playing through it takes a little work to reexamine the logs and work out was it the rolling only that won it for the Bedouin or was it my superior tactics, or rather, in the end, did I just have too many units? In the end, it seemed my tactics and rolling had only a little to do with the victory but rather it would need a slight tweaking in the balance of the game. Overall it was a great scenario and it was good to see that our final feedback, of which there was only a little, in part led to the development and fine tuning of that scenario.

To all ASL players out there, if you ever get the opportunity, do some play testing where you can. It leads to new and exciting and more importantly balanced scenarios and you can count yourself lucky that your one of the few to play this scenario

first, a badge I wear with honour, even if I did have to make it myself out of card board!

Cheers

Andrew



To VASL or Not To VASL:

This all started when a ftf opponent and I first noticed some discussion on GameSquad Forums about FTF VASL, FTF, and VASL PBEM, and we began a further in depth discussion into the relative merits and drawbacks of each. I believe Steve Bowen does a wonderful job here explaining why FTF has some real tangible and intangible items you cannot get from VASL, so without further ado: we present Steve Bowen!

The Case For More Face To Face Play

The ease and simplicity of online connectivity has been a very good thing for the ASL community. We connect on forums and websites with fellow players. We find answers to our rules questions, sometimes in mere minutes. We can use the wonder that is VASL to play games from the comfort of our homes with players from around

the world. But the mesmerizing effect of playing, talking about and reading about ASL through a computer screen can also have the effect of divorcing us from the very heart and soul of ASL which is Face to Face play.

I believe it's very important for all ASL players, except perhaps those who live in very remote areas, to try their best to find local face to face opponents. It can be a lot of work to pack up your gear and travel off to a game. But it brings rewards that can't be found over a computer. As important as online communities may be they still can't fulfill the basic human need for true personal interaction. Looking across a table at your opponent with some wondrous ASL maps spread out with counters between you is simply a much richer human experience than staring at a screen and talking to your opponent through a microphone.

If you play ASL the chances are you are a middle-aged guy. In classic middle-aged guy style you probably find yourself grumbling about kids today who spend way too much time staring at screens and poking at keys. You probably also grumble about all the money young people waste on things they buy but don't use. Here's an opportunity to practice what you preach. Go push cardboard instead of keyboards! Do you really want to be a guy who spends a bunch of

money on boardgames and then never actually plays them in all their glory? Are you spending more time doing ASL stuff online because it's really what you want? Or is it just something you drifted into because it was so convenient?

Here's what happened to me. A few years back I woke up one day and realized that I was spending most of my waking life staring at a flickering screen. I worked at a computer and I came home and played at a computer. I got my news online and my mindless entertainment at the TV. And this was back before the proliferation of smart phones and iPads and eReaders. It could be worse now. I could see that I was on a very slippery slope, that I was becoming addicted to the constant flow of digital bits. So I decided to step away. I thought back on my youth and all the things I enjoyed doing, hiking and sketching and playing boardgames. I slowly weaned myself from the screens and made a steady conscious effort to pull away from the virtual and reconnect with the physical. I reconnected with the hobbies I so enjoyed decades ago.

I believe that a great many people, in this wired and connected age, need to ask themselves how much screen-time is too much? Are you really on the path that you want to be on? How much have you given up? The answers

will be different for each person. But if you love ASL then you have the perfect tool to use to step away from the computer. Get your gear in order and put out the call for a local opponent. Find the nearest ASL club. Or start one. Go to a nearby gaming conference, set up ASL and teach a newbie. It might not be an easy process but it guarantee it will be worth it.

I annotated here to Steve probably the "big 3 " of VASL travails for those players using it: communication difficulties, as we generally write much different than we speak in real life; the dropped game, as by definition, we are using PBEM VASL to fill in due to real life incompatibilities with ASL play, and that means even some PBEM games will get interrupted in our otherwise hectic normality; and lack of camaraderie that easily develops when you are ftf and can really "show off " the new copy of FB you just got at WO 2012! (we all are really Looking forward to THIS, and I take back at least 1/4th of all the bad things I've ever said about Chas Argent!)

Good points about the ease of communication in FtF play because speaking is generally much cleaner and more nuanced than writing.

Another point I forgot to make was that in FtF play you have a much better view of the battlefield. You can see the

relationship between the units clearly even on a big multi-map scenario. Playing online will always is awkward in comparison because you are just seeing a portion of the map. Although I have to admit it is vastly easier to deal with counters in VASL than in FtF. I love the quick flip from SQ to HS or the ease of ELRing a unit.

As you can see, there are many reasons that VASL or VASL PBEM can be useful, or even appealing, but there are certain gains we can all achieve with ftf play that just cannot be duplicated with a computer ASL.

I want to thank Steve Bowen for his efforts here. Steve is almost always up for a FTF game if you are in the Bay Area, and can be reached easily through the Nor Cal ASL Group Yahoo Group List Serv.



Club News:

Having passed our Contact DR with 8's all around; here's the news from our local ASL scenes.

SVASL Club:

Michael Rhodes hosted the Labor Day event at the Santa Clara Marriott to a nice group playing both full ASL and an ASLSK contingent. We will be bringing full coverage of the results in the next issue.

SVASL Club regular meetings are scheduled for the 4th Saturday of every month, at the game room of the Game Kastle, located at 1350 Coleman Ave., Santa Clara, CA 95050 ph: 408-727-2452 <http://www.gamekastle.com>

Everyone is welcome to post to the Club board at the Yahoo Group Website if you would like to pre-arrange a scenario or opponent.

Nor Cal ASL Club:

Nor Cal ASL Club has three separate meeting locations for the ASL players in the group. The primary one is 2nd Saturdays at:

Location: Olde World Games, 123 Peabody Road, Vacaville Street: 123 Peabody Road City State Zip: Vacaville Phone: 707-455-8445

Opening bell is at 11 am and closing bell is at 11 pm. See you there.

We have subsidiary groups meeting throughout the valley also most notably:

The Miniature Wargaming Society of Sacramento meetings is only on Sundays, at the Carmichael library here in Sacramento. We have 2-3 ASL players involved so if you come up for a day trip, let us know in advance and we can get you into a game.

And also:

There's also a small group playing ASL on the 1st and 3rd Sundays at Endgame in downtown Oakland.

NorCal ASL Group is also hosting this weekend, November 12th, 2011, at the Olde Worlde Games Store, an ASL Game Day with Prizes, being assembled by Dennis Donovan. All are welcome ASL or ASLSK, and prizes will be door raffles along with a Col Klink award for

the best 6+1 in the crowd. Here's the scoop:

Posted by: "Dennis Donovan"
donovandj2002@yahoo.com
donovandj2002

Date: Sun Nov 6, 2011 9:33 pm
(PST))

Hello all!

We are set for next Saturday starting at 11 am at Old World Games in Vacaville. At last count we're expecting about a dozen folks or so.

Bring your maps, Russians, Germans and Americans at the least. I will have some scenarios as suggestions should you not already have something picked out.

There will be a \$10 donation at the door. The idea is to have 1/2 the ante go to the first winner of the drawing and the second 1/2 to as a store credit prize.

If you cannot or do not want to pay the \$10, please let me know and we can work something out, especially if the \$10 means the difference between you attending or not. I know budgets are tight and some of you will be traveling a ways to be here.

We will have a prize for worst luck (keep track of those boxcars!) and a prize for the Good Sport category. The latter category will be nominated by an opponent. It for the person who is the coolest under fire, passes the personal morale checks and so forth.

Other prizes (determined by a drawing) will be: Countersmith Turrets, Original framed ASL inspired artwork, cash and a DVD among other things.

Please contact me if you have any question, comments or concerns!

I look forward to seeing you Saturday.

-Dennis

530-400-3113

With all of these options, we hope that any ASL player in the greater Bay / Valley Area can make contact and find a game! If you are new to the greater Bay / Delta area in Northern CA and play ASL, please contact any one of our groups, and we can get you networked into the local ASLr's for some games and meeting dates. Sounding Off!



Defensive Fires:

Opponents wanted:

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

Letters to the Editor:

Posted by: "Steve"
owenapowen@gmail.com
Date: Sat Aug 27, 2011 12:40 pm
(PDT))

Thanks for posting those, Jon.

The SASL CG looks very interesting. I experimented with adding an armored

contingent to the standard infantry company in SASL. But it seemed to me that the armor was too powerful.

SASL is designed for infantry and doesn't always seem to handle armor that well in my opinion. For instance, you know that enemy suspect markers are not going to activate unless the tank drives right next to them. This often lets you freely encircle clusters of enemy suspect markers with your armor and cut off their potential rout paths once they do activate.

I was wondering if you experimented with modifying the activation rules to make it more likely that AT Guns or enemy armor would activate?

Important Notice:

The guys who own / run Olde Worlde Games here in Vacaville, CA cited how disappointing some of the summer ASL event turnout had been.

Now I know everyone says "Nah, never happen here, too much diversity of games" but consider: FRASL Club lost a good game store and local supplier of ASL merchandise. LASL Club did, also, and some of the very nice stores that used to be in the Bay area are gone with the economic downwind.

I know, with the use of the CPU and MMP ./ CH/ Gamers Armory./ Noble Knight Games, we can just get all our ASL stuff right to our door, who needs the store to order it, right?

If we give a bit to our game store, they will in turn stay open to our ASL needs for gathering places. Don't turn away from your local store and buy 100% online from the suppliers. Give them a bit of your business, too, After all, is Counter Smith Workshops or LFT going to open their doors once a month to a full blown ASL club crowd for

open gaming all day and night on a Saturday regularly?

Didn't think so.

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