

Red Banner

A quarterly fanzine for the Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) board game
By the DC Conscripts ASL Club



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Commissar's Call: *PLAY IT SAFE*



As in-person gaming resumes, keep safety in mind since we are not out of the woods yet. Mitigate COVID health risks by listening to Dr. Fauci since our “6+1” politicians have definitely gone FUBAR!

Conscripts' Chatter: *LOOKING BACK AT HUMAN WAVE 2020*



In the wake of a highly successful virtual Human Wave tournament (June 24-28), the proletariat rejoices at the work of Andy Goldin, Bob Schaaf, and Eric Michael who provide us a thrilling after action report with expert commentary, posted later in this issue of Red Banner.

See full tourney results here.

<https://humanwaveconscripts.com/results-from-2020/>

Amazing ASL Lore: *HOW MY CRIPPLED SHERMAN DEFEATED HIS PANTHER*

In a recent playing of AP 11, Swamp Cats, my Lend Lease Sherman steered wide around woods to get a side shot on a Panther, but bogged beside some marsh and so couldn't complete the flanking maneuver. Well aware that my 76mm AP rounds were useless against a Panther's front, I chanced HE for the collateral attack since the Panther was commander exposed. Maybe I could stun him? The muzzle flashed. I hit. He rolled box cars on morale to trigger a stun recall!

New Article: *SOVIET SQUAD TACTICS IN WWII*

Sit back and watch the slide show at this link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfZXlpJkDJg>

RUINS OF AN OLD FORT

ASL Scenario DCRB 6

Little Saint Bernard Pass, France, June 21, 1940: To grab some scraps before Germany took them all, Italy declared war on France, June 10. After the Alpini Corp's central column passed through Little Saint Bernard, Sous-Lieutenant Henry Desserteaux halted them with fire from his 70-man contingent in Redoute Ruinée. Frustrated, the Italians threw in the 101st Motorised Division, "Trieste".



Board Configuration

Victory Conditions: The Italians win immediately upon amassing 15 VP. Award CVP normally. Award EVP for Italian units exited off the south map edge on or adjacent to Y10.



Only hex columns R-GG are playable.

Turn Record:

French Set Up First
Italians Move First

1	2	3	4	5	6

Order of Battle:

French Elements of the 66th Division: ELR 2, SAN 4

Set up in any level-3 or higher hexes.

1 x 9-1, 1 x 7-0

3 x 4-3-7, 2 x 1-2-7

3 x MMG

3 x 3+5+7 PB, 18 AP Mine Factors

Italian elements of the Alpini and Trieste divisions ELR 2, SAN 3

Enter on turn 1 along the north edge on or within two hexes of Y1.

1 x 8-1, 1 x 7-0

6 x 3-4-7

2 x LMG, 1 x 45mm MTR, 1 x DC

Enter on turn 4 along the north edge on or within two hexes of Y1.

1 x 6+1

5 x 3-4-6

5 x Squad Motorcycles

Special Rules:

1. EC are wet with ground snow and no wind.
2. Italian 3-4-7s and leaders can use scaling (B23.424).

Aftermath: Trieste's motorcycle battalion broke through by 1100, but Desserteaux and his men resisted for another four days until the armistice was signed. Similar firefights erupted all along the Franco-Italian border until June 25. The Italians had gained about five miles at a cost of 3,800 Italian casualties, many from frost bite, to only 270 French killed or wounded.

After Action Report:

First Day of Diadem

A Game Report from Human Wave 2020

By Andy Goldin and Bob Schaaf, with commentary and analysis by Eric Michael

In this reprise of the popular format from the old Avalon Hill *The General* magazine, we describe a battle between two Conscripts in our Human Wave 2020. This round of play listed scenarios by “partners and proxies” and we selected a classic fight for the hills in A89 First Day of Diadem.

Before the Game

[Andy]

My plan was straightforward. That is, to cut down the Germans as they moved across the open ground by using my HMG, light mortar, and 75mm. I had enough infantry on the line to prevent an initial rush from coming up the hill. And my eight morale made plenty of FPFs possible. It would have been nice if I'd had a more favorable shellhole placement but other than one in B10, all the shellholes were on the hill. The shellhole in 9G8 was especially well sited as it was on Level 2 with a clear view of the road and the saddle below. All my units were in terrain (woods or shellholes) or would receive a +1 TEM for height advantage at the minimum. As for the Germans themselves, I thought the 81mm might be a problem, but had my own 75 in position to do “counter battery fire” as required. Knowing that Bob would have to charge across the open ground made me feel pretty good about the game as we were getting started.

[Bob]

The Germans score points as CPV value of Good Order units on board 9 times the level of the hex occupied by the unit. The Germans need 25 points or more to win. So 4 squads on level 3 ($4 \times 2 \times 3 = 24$), or 6 squads on level 2 ($6 \times 2 \times 2 = 24$), plus even a half-squad on level 1 is enough for the win. I have 15 squad-equivalents, plus 6 CVP of leaders (plus crew) at start - simple, really. :-) I'll tally the running score below, but note that I wasn't really thinking in those terms during our playthrough. A little more attention to that might have change some of my thinking during play.

Unfortunately, as Andy notes, there is a lot of open ground to cover. Fortunately, there is ample time (8 turns), given the distance to be covered. The Free French have several formidable toys in their arsenal, including 2 x RoF 3 SWs in the HMG and 60 MTR, and the 75* ART piece, all placed on high ground with good LOS. Hanging over the German commander like the Sword of Damocles, the Free French also have a module of 100 OBA with offboard observer available starting on turn 4 - sooner if a German MMC occupies a level 2 hill hex on Board 9.... So we'll just take our time sauntering up the hill to delay its appearance as long as possible.

One shellhole was created in a decent spot for a German firebase in 15Z9. So I placed 2 x MMG/467 and an 8-1 here. These guys should be able to throw 16 FP (18, since we opted to use the IIFT) out to 6 hexes and 12 FP (14 IIFT) out to 12 hexes, with RoF follow up shots of 8 FP (10 IIFT) out to 12 hexes. All with -1 leadership. Good in theory, but these guys would turn out to have glass jaws. Both mortars were placed on high ground with good LOS to a target-rich environment. I would hope to get decent Smoke coverage from the 81 MTR. Both mortars also had good LOS to most woods hexes on the Free French hill, so as to discourage occupancy of that defensive terrain. One half-squad manned the 50 MTR while a second stood by to take over should the first falter. Placement of one of the 8-0 leaders back here would prove to largely be a waste of that precious rally resource, although he did rally a couple of half-squads to feed into the meat grinder later.

The general plan was a slow advance up the center with about half the infantry. Another 4 squads would head up the Axis right to keep those defenders engaged and maybe make some headway there - and possibly disperse some force from the eventual appearance of the OBA. Mostly, the order of the day would be to form multi-location firegroups as we advanced slowly forward, with half-squad scouts charging ahead to draw fire and possibly lock units from subsequent firing.

[Eric]

I am honored to be the neutral commentary but am well aware that my experience and skill level in the game is far below that of Andy and Bob. I have never played this scenario before although I did look at it when I was planning to attend the tournament. So, my initial thoughts for both sides are as follows.

The Free French forces are pretty weak. 9 Squads, 1 x HMG, 2 x LMG, a French 75 and a 50mm mortar. In contrast the Germans have 15 squads, 2 x MMG, 1 x 81 mortar, 1 x 50 mortar and 3 x LMG. The real strength of the French is when they get their OBA support. Of note, the support does not come before turn 4 unless the Germans are on a elevation 2 hill hex.

There are two approaches for the defense of the hill; a forward or a reverse slope defense. Both have strengths and weaknesses. The forward slope defense forces the German to prep fire and advance in open ground. At the same time it provides room MMCs to rout back and be rallied to fight again. The reverse slope defense does not give the German any prep fire targets but the defenders only get one chance to hurt the Germans. Once they are broken they are mostly out of the fight. In addition, giving up hill hexes gives the Germans free victory points.

Andy chose to defend on the forward slope. He smartly put his main “killers” on the heights and used the rest of his forces as a trip wire. My only criticism is that I am not sure it is worth it to stack a 7-0 leader with the front lines just to avoid a cowering result. I would be concerned that he may break and cause the squad he is with to pin or worse. I think that I would have put him in the rear to rally broken squads.

Bob set up to take advantage of Andy's forward slope defense. I find it curious that he did not set up on the level 4 hill hex that is the highest point in the map. Had Andy done a reverse slope defense that would have been a logical place for either his "kill stack" or 81mm mortar. The placement of his 81 mortar allows him to range the hill top without having to shift the mortar. Also, he massed his forces in the center. This is an aggressive approach to hit Andy's line where it is strongest.

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Figure 1: Setup for Diadem

German Turn 1

[Andy]

So much for that. Bob started off by smoking my HMG which put me back on my heels. I'm lucky his mortar didn't maintain rate on his SMOKE, otherwise I would have had a real problem. His second Prep Fire of the game cost me my 8-0 leader who rolled a 12 and a "kill" on the Wound Severity dr, knocking him out of the game right from the get-go. That was depressing. And I certainly did NOT anticipate a 18FP attack on my light mortar. In a stroke of luck, they became Fanatic. Turns out I would need their improved morale, since the next shot on them caused them to break. Mercifully the remainder of his shots were ineffective.

Luckily I had some good dice on DFF and Dfire on his units, which broke easily -- too easily for elite troops. By the end of the Advancing Fire phase, both lines had erupted in fire. Even so, Bob had succeeded at advancing a skirmish line to the base of the hill. During the Rout phase we discovered the paucity of rally terrain. In some cases, reaching it would be a challenge for both sides. Luckily I had a copse of woods in 9H4 which would offer some cover while my broken squad in 9H8 could route through crag to get to the woods in I7, from which I chose to continue to K7.

[Bob]

Can't complain about PFPh, but yeah, took it on the chin in DFF and DF. Andy's HMG and 8-1 firing out of the Smoke hit snakes on an LMG/548, and the resulting MC ELR-reduced the squad to broken, 2nd line. As Andy notes, RtPh proved the dangers of the limited available rally terrain and ample open ground. One 1st line squad reduced due to interdiction attempting to reach cover and leadership. Troops advanced into a broad skirmish line at the base of the hill, with one LMG/548 risking a rise to level 1.

[Eric] – Wow. Bob's prep fire was deadly. He got two of the crew served weapons. The French 75 is still available. However, I think that he should have silenced the other machine gun instead of advancing. I think Andy should have used his French 75 to go after one of the mass casualty causing units on the hills instead of the assault force.

[/]

French Turn 1

[Andy]

The beginning of the Free French player turn saw the Germans nearly within hand grenade range. While my front line was intact, two of my three heavy weapons were offline: the HMG was enshrouded in SMOKE and the Fanatic mortar crew was hiding in the trees behind their tube.

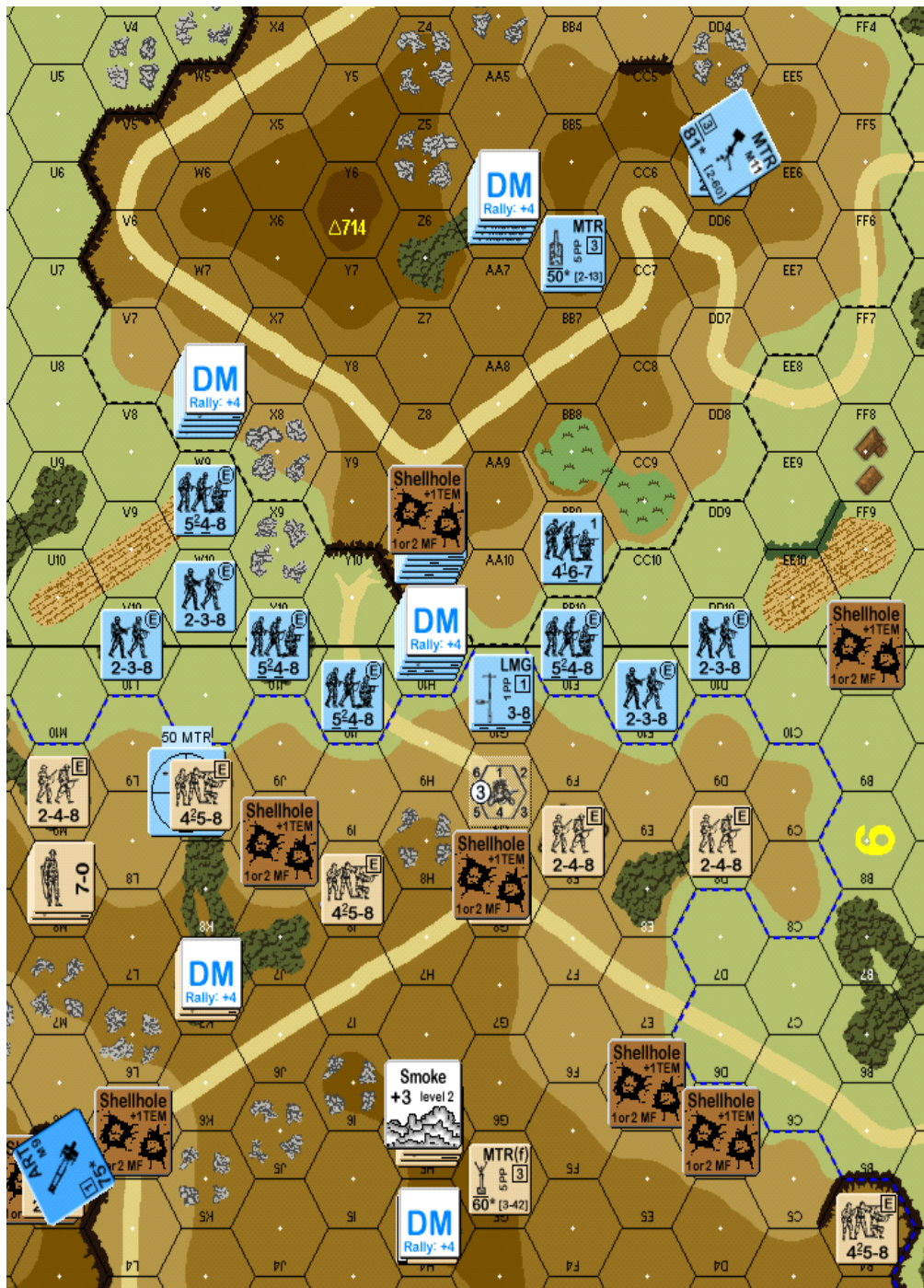


Figure 2: Free French Player Turn 1

A self rally brought back my Fanatic mortar-firing half squad while a boxcars reduced one of Bob's elite squads to a half squad. My turn was off to a good start. Now aware of the danger presented by his 81mm mortar I knew I needed an immediate effect. My 75 gun succeeded at placing SMOKE on it and things were looking up. Not wanting to give up a PrepFire with my smoked HMG I thought I'd roll the dice and see if I could make something happen.

Plus 3 on the dice (+3 for smoke, +1 for firing out of smoke and -1 for Leadership) and a “9” on my dice earned me nothing. The only PrepFire which did anything for me was a 4+1 on his kill stack which surprisingly resulted in a broken 467, thereby reducing the firepower of the kill stack by half. Bob got payback by breaking my key squad in G8 with small arms fire and reducing my squad in D8 to a half squad and eliminate the survivors with his light mortar. We would see repeatedly that woods would be deadly places to seek shelter. Being down a squad and a half now meant I had to shorten my line in the APh and move my front line leader (the 7-0) to rally troops.

[Bob]

Losing half the firebase to a that low FP attack really hurt. In a continuation of my constant inability to read obvious LOS blockages, I tried a shot from the 50 MTR to the broken LMG/458 in 9K7, but the woods in J7/K8 *clearly* block. In a cruel twist of the requisite roll of the dice came up snakes (at least it wasn't boxcars, right?). On the plus side, the mortar follows up with about 4 RoF shots on the unit in the D8 woods, ultimately eliminating them. The 81 MTR rolls to acquire the ART, but fails RoF. Large German multi-hex FGs on both flanks CR a broken SQ and break another. Andy advances the 8-1 and HMG out of the Smoke.

[Eric]

Good recovery from Andy. I also see now that his placement of the 75mm limits his shooting to elevation 3 hexes and above. Smoke on the German mortar will help. Breaking half the kill stack shows that luck goes both ways. Also glad to see Andy get the 7-0 out of the line of fire.

[/]

German Turn 2

[Andy]

At the beginning of the German second turn, my front line strength was down by two squad equivalents and I had two and a half squads offline, attempting to rally. With my defense having gone from “good” to “fair” in only one turn I was getting worried I wouldn't be able to hold on until my artillery would fire. Bob had a reasonably successful RPh but half his kill stack was still offline, with the 467 having failed to rally. My front line squads were able to rally but my mortar team failed to possess their gun. Even so with my HMG and mortar online and a cohesive front line with a small reserve, I thought I could hold.

You could imagine my dismay when Bob's 81mm, firing out of SMOKE, scored a CH and then a KIA on my 75. I was taking my personal morale check when the next 81mm shot, fired at my HMG, malf'd his mortar. The dice giveth and the dice taketh away.

Bob's other Prep Fire was ineffective but my dice were hot in the MPh. His CH on my gun activated my sniper, which broke his light mortar crew and ensured the gun would remain offline temporarily. Bob's Germans inched closer to my hill. The only interesting DFPh shot I had was a 4 flat which compelled Bob to roll boxcars, thereby eliminating a half squad. My French Moroccans shrugged off Bob's AFPh. End of German Turn 2 saw the Germans firmly situated on Level 1 of the hill.

[Bob]

Yeah, that Crit on the Gun was nice. :-) The malf, not so much. :-o Another 548 ELRs to DF. Counting the score at the end of my turn, I have 10 points on the hill. Sticking to the plan, we assiduously avoid rising to level 2.

[Eric]

Bob has a great moment when his mortar took out the French 75 shooting out of smoke. Then it malfed and he lost his 50mm mortar and his kill stack was at half strength. I think that he was a little too aggressive in moving forward. I think that he should have laid back and broken squads because he did not want to rise to level 2 until turn 4.[/]

French Turn 2



Figure 3: French Turn 2

[Andy]

At the beginning of my PFPh I had to make a tough call as to how I would use my limited heavy weapons – should I use them on the advancing Germans or on his base of fire? While I knew the advancing German squads were bad, having to endure the fire from his reformed kill stack was worse, so I opted to fire my HMG at the Germans across the valley in the shellholes in Z9. My HMG got good effects and broke his leader and a squad, thereby significantly reducing the potential damage. Another PFPh from a 458 earned a K result against the HS, thereby taking off a little pressure on my ridgeline defenders.

I use the MPh to pull back a bit, consolidate my defenders and shorten my line. Although my move was successful it seemed like it was much too early in the game to have to do that. Even so, it was beneficial as it allowed me to constitute a small “reserve” on the G4/I6 ridgeline, which allowed me to shuffle units in to man the HMG as Bob focused his fire on that position and broke the defenders.

[Bob]

Andy's HMG PrepFire actually broke (and ELR-reduced) *both* MMG squads (one had just rallied), in addition to the leader. Fortunately he didn't maintain rate. However, even without that, this was a huge hit for me since (Spoiler Alert) these guys would *never* come back. :-(With the Free French HMG out momentarily due to breaking the leader and squad, in a duel of unequals I counterbattery fire the 50 MTR at the 60 MTR to no effect. Given the possessing HS's Fanaticism, I might have better concentrated my fire on the broken 8-1 and HMG SQ.

[Eric]

Andy proves the old adage of firefights. Win the fire power fight first and then worry about his assault element. Andy broke the kill stack and then pulled back into a reverse slope defense to not give Bob prep fire targets. From here on out Bob will have to come to Andy

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Turn 3

[Andy]

The Rally phase of the German Player Turn 3 saw two significant developments. First, Bob x'd his malf'd 81mm mortar, taking it out of the game. Second, the leader of his kill stack failed to rally, thereby assuring the stack would stay offline this player turn. Bob chose to PFPh all down the line instead of continue the advance to the level 2 hill, in order to avoid triggering my artillery from coming in early (by SSR, my OBA wouldn't fire until a German unit was on level 2 or Turn 4, whichever came first).

Bob's PFPh was mostly ineffective but did pin my 60mm mortar crew, since even a “9” morale of the fanatic HS manning the weapon wasn't good enough for my dice rolling. My DFPh saw me break a German elite squad but otherwise the turn was uneventful.

[Bob]

As Andy notes, two very bad(tm) results in the RPh for the Axis. With time left before I want to hit level 2, and wanting to avoid any more unnecessary FFMO and/or FFNAM penalties, I choose to Prep almost everybody on the Bd 9 hill, sadly to little effect. Routs off and Advances up bring my point total to 13.

[Eric]

I think that Andy should have fired at his kill stack to keep them desperate. Even a 50mm shot from the pinned crew would have accomplished that. I also think Bob was right to prep fire everyone. I just think he should have done it on turn 2 as well.

[/]



Figure 4: French Turn 3

[Andy]

The situation at the end of the RPh of French Turn 3 is shown in Figure 4. The leader of his kill stack failed to rally – again – thereby saving me from another turn of getting shredded by his MGs. I had only my 8-1 leader offline but both my remaining heavy weapons were manned and ready, being the beneficiaries of having my “reserve” committed while the broken squad was offline to rally.

This PFPh would turn out to be a bloody one for Bob. My mortar, having already found its range to the two squads, LMG and 8-1 in the woods to my front, went on a rate tear which eliminated a squad through MC failures and left only a desperate, wounded leader and broken HS remaining. In my MPH I managed to reposition a squad on the other Level 3 ridge to fire down the road in the next turn. Bob’s DFPh saw the dice cut both ways, as his 50mm went on a rate tear of its own, pinning a squad and killing the 8-1 I had attempting to rally in the woods and half of the squad stacked with it. This left me with only one leader, a 7-0 – not good at all.

[Bob]

The fire base leader falling to rally, despite *not* being under DM, was a real killer for me. One of the 548s in 15Z10 rallies and HOBs to Fanatic; but their glory would be short-lived with that - 2 MTR Acq on their heads. The first Prep shot from the MTR scores a 1KIA on the stack, eliminating the other 548 and breaking the Fanatic 548 and leader. My Sniper exacts some small payback, pinning the MTR half-squad. Undeterred, they lob one more salvo, wounding the leader and reducing the squad... and get pinned by the Sniper again for their insolence. More payback comes in the form of a K/2 from the MTR on Andy's 8-1 and broken squad, which they Yahtzee, leaving a half-squad.

[Eric]

Andy is really challenging the dice gods here. I would have put fire on the kill stack. Instead he is giving them yet another turn the rally and shoot up the Free French. So far he has gotten away with it. Fortunately his arty will fall next turn and he still has forces for a counterattack

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Turn 4

[Andy]

With a sigh of relief we flipped the turn marker to Turn 4, which meant I could use my offboard observer to call my 100mm artillery. I just had to hold on another few phases... Bob’s rally phase saw him make no headway rallying his broken units. The situation is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 5: German Turn 4

Bob's PFPh by his light mortar and infantry on my hill against my HMG was ineffective. He maneuvered on my left, presumably to get in position to force me off the G4/H4 ridgeline. Some good dice got me a K/2 on another of his elite squads and left the survivors reduced albeit in good order. My other fire was ineffective. Finally I had the thought I should have had earlier. That is, to fire on his broken kill stack to keep it DM'd. Gotta kick a guy while he's down so he stays there. The turn ended with Bob's Germans in a line running east-west on Level 2 of the hill while I formed a horseshoe built around the G4/H4 ridge and the crag to the west, backed up by an LMG at Level 3 and my last leader hidden under a concealment marker. Since my only uncommitted unit was broken in H1, I no longer had a reserve.

[Bob]

The fire base leader fails to rally *again* despite *again* not being under DM! With Andy having the luxury of being able to target them this turn, that's an advantage I likely won't see again. Rallied half-squads charge down from the AA6 woods to bolster the attacking forces on the German right flank. With my advances to level 2, I now have 22 points on the hill; but far too tightly grouped for the impending arrival of the OBA, with some units in woods. Not good. All I can do at this point is hope for some wildly inaccurate spotting, and some effective rallies (the dice Gods owe me, don't they?).

[Eric]

This is the game in my opinion. With the French OBA in action, Andy has now achieved fire superiority. The 6 squads that Bob has on the hill are no longer enough to keep it from the 6.5 that Andy has to take it back. Yes, there was some back luck with rallying the kill stack but I think in hindsight Bob should have worked to kill more squads with fire at the beginning. Andy, survived a few catastrophes and is now focusing on shooting at the kill stack.

[/]

[Andy]

French Player Turn 4 started with an unremarkable Rally Phase. The big moment was the beginning of my PFPh, when I drew my first chit for OBA and it was... red! Naturally I was quite disappointed but thought I could hold for the time being without it. As a consolation prize of sorts, my mortar went on another rate tear, shooting up the Germans on Hill 714, knocking out the mortar crew and a half squad adjacent to it before losing rate. My small arms fire against his infantry caused Bob to roll some MCs which resulted in another boxcars, sending yet another half squad to the casualties bin. At this point I had eliminated 12 CVP, while Bob had killed off 10 CVP of mine. Although there was no clear advantage as far as the CVP count, it was looking like the Germans were starting to run out of steam. A quick review of the victory conditions highlighted for me that I really had to kill a sufficient number of Germans to make it mathematically impossible for him to get enough squads on the hills to accumulate enough VP to win. My small arms fire did little to 'move the needle' on that and I chose to skulk away with the remainder of my force in an attempt to preserve combat power. The heavy weapons crews on the hilltop would just have to take it.

[Bob]

Temporarily saved by the red card! I lost count of the number of times Andy rolled his SAN instead of mine (actually, in this case I can tell you exactly from the log file - his MTR hit *his* SAN *3 times* on TH/IFT rolls) - if you're going to roll low, at least toss me a bone, would ya'? :-D. My shots against the SW wielding units on top of the hill, including a sizeable multi-hex FG for about 16 FP, did no damage. I finally decide to low crawl the fire base units out of the shellholes, hoping, I guess, to ultimately get out of the line of fire and maybe get to the wounded 8-1 for some rally support so as to have a chance to get back into the fight. Andy still has a strong line in place to keep me from getting units into position on the most highly-scoring hilltop positions.

[Eric]

The red chit is a stay of execution and not an amnesty. Andy has, with the squads, firepower superiority on the Germans. Unless they can rally and get some people up the hill they are in danger of being pushed off. If Andy gets the OBA to fire it is game over.

[/]

Turn 5

[Andy]

Bob had some pretty good dice on his rally attempts but still couldn't bring back his kill stack. A fusillade from his entire line managed to break my HMG-toting squad but I had a HS behind it, ready to take its place next turn. To generate those effects, Bob had to mass his Germans, which in turn made a good artillery target. This DFPh I drew a black chit, and my artillerymen went to work. The Spotting Round landed only two hexes off, thereby setting me up for an easy adjustment next turn. Another round of small arms fire did little but good dice managed to break a squad in his still-broken kill stack down to a HS and keep them desperate for another turn. Even so, Bob advanced his Germans adjacent or within one hex of my defenders and I knew the next player turn would be interesting.

[Bob]

The short drift of the spotting round was a bad omen. My sniper pinned the 60 MTR crew again, possibly saving me from another rain of holy rate fire. The fire base stack rout further away in hopes of getting back into the fight. Unfortunately, Andy and I both misread A4.72, such that we thought it prevented the 8-1 from advancing up into the crag to help the fire base stack in the next RPh, because being wounded reduced his MF to less than that required to enter the hex. Checking after the fact, there is a Q&A clarifying that if a unit has at least 1 MF remaining after deducting portage costs, it may conduct an advance vs. difficult terrain. Likely wouldn't have made much difference at this point, but might have given me some more FP and points to rush the hill with. C'est la Guerre. (Or perhaps more appropriately, Es ist Krieg.) Moves and advances bring my point total just shy of the needed 25; but I don't really expect all these guys to remain in good order. I'm going to **have** to get some units up to the hilltop. Provided I get a favorable drift on the impending FFE, or enough guys can survive, maybe I can make it harder for him to reclaim the HMG, which should help. And if that darn 8-1 would just rally the fire base units!

[Eric]

At the end of the rally phase Bob has 7 squad equivalents. I notice for the first time that he has an 8-0 in the front line. I would have used that leader to rally units instead. Also, at the end, in the Advance Phase, he does not advance his wounded 8-1 leader into the kill stack. (Note: The players later acknowledged misinterpreting A4.72 "Advance versus difficult terrain" to mean that this advance could NOT be made when in fact it COULD be made.) Those two squads and their MMG would make all the difference. The temporary stay of execution is ended with the successful French OBA SR.

[/]

[Andy]



Figure 6: Rally Phase French Turn 5

French turn 5 is shown in Figure 5. It started with a successful self-rally of the broken HS which had run off the hill. Bob had some success in his rallies and it was on to the PFPh. Starting with the artillery correction, I placed the AR in the original target hex. Since I was correcting the rounds by only three hexes the extent of error was only one hex. Luckily for me, the rounds impacted just to the left, in J7, so that it would generate airburst effects on the units in the woods. His elite half squads survived 2 and 3MCs but good dice against a 238 in the woods, with -1 penalty for airbursts, eliminated it. The real kicker was the “snake eyes” against the 548 which had moved adjacent to my abandoned HMG, eliminating the squad. At that point Bob had suffered 16 CVP to my 10, and eight squad equivalents to my seven. Feeling that he no longer had the combat power for a win, he conceded.

[Bob]

Andy couldn't have asked for a better drift roll. (Really, there was only one direction it could've gone that would've worked in my favor - back to I9.) With the elimination of a squad and a half, the 81 MTR long gone, the 8-1 fire base seemingly unwilling to ever get back into the fight, precious little reserves to feed onto the hill, and the need to extract forces from the clutches of the OBA, I opted to throw up the white flag. Sure, I might've been able to pull a rabbit out of my hat - maybe the 50 MTR could go on another rate tear, or maybe the 8-1 would finally grow a pair - and I've certainly pressed on to victory under seemingly worse circumstances; but the odds just seemed awfully long.

[Eric]

Wow. Talk about dice gods. With the drift and the snake eyes all hope of a German final assault ended. Not surprisingly Bob conceded the game.

[/]

Closing Comments

[Andy]

The German Turn 1 PFPh really caught me by surprise and set me back on my heels. The loss of my 75 and my 8-0 early on put me at a disadvantage, to say the least. Had it not been for some good fire attacks, I don't think I would have had the time or space to reorganize my defense. There aren't many places to hide and my French Moroccans paid dearly to hold on to the ground. Shortening my line to give me a reserve to cycle in and out to replace broken units was probably something I did right, and I think events showed that choosing to target the kill stacks instead of the German wave coming up the hill was a good choice. Even so, I don't think I could have held off Bob were it not for a couple of rate tears with my light mortar. The mortars made woods deadly for both sides, to an extent I hadn't seen in quite some time. There was plenty of tough fighting and a challenging scenario for both sides.

Bob is a great player and fun to play with. I'm looking forward to our next game!

[Bob]

Things started off pretty well - a little rate and more Smoke from the 81 MTR would've been nice. I was a probably bit rash with some of my early moves, especially sacrificing some of the half-squads. One thing I could've done better was to try for a few inf smoke grenades along the way.

I like the idea of pairing the 8-1 with both MMGs, and the shellhole placement afforded a decent opportunity for a little cover. If I had it to do over, I'd probably just spread everyone out and Prep/Advance for the first few turns, since you have the time and don't want to rush to level 2. With the French offboard observer at 9A6, one option might be to concentrate on an advance up the German right, as it could offer some positions out of LOS of the observer.

Andy did a great job cycling his units in and out of the line and maintaining solid coverage of all of the approaches. I really enjoyed the match, outcome notwithstanding. Plenty of hot and cold dice on both sides, which made for some wild swings. Great game. Look forward to the next match.

[Eric]

I think Bob and Andy both overlooked the peculiarity of the Free French OBA. Andy took a risk in setting up a forward slope defense. It worked for him because it allowed the French to chew up the Germans before turn 4 but it was a close run thing. After watching this replay, I think I would opt with a reverse slope defense to force the German on to the hill early to get my OBA early. Instead Andy took early losses that if they had continued would have lost the game for him. Simply stated, the French cannot afford to lose more than a handful of squads before their OBA shows up. The forward slope defense allowed him to rout the squads back, rally them and form a solid reverse slope defense. As it was, he had six unbroken squads at the end of turn 3 and was able to hang on until the OBA showed up. I think that there is an argument to make for having 8-0 and 7-0 leaders in the front lines to keep MMCs and MGs from cowering but I personally will only do it with MMG or HMG and not LMG. I think Andy should have kept those leaders in the rear at rout locations to rally troops. After the initial turn he played well with the exception that I think he should have directed fire at the fires support instead of the assault teams to achieve fire superiority. He also had luck that the non-DM kill stack never rallied.

Bob had a good strategy but I think that he allowed his first turn prep fire success to cause him to be over confident. I think that it was a mistake to advance in the first turn when he knew that he did not want to be on elevation 2 until turn 4. He focused his Prep Fire on knocking out Andy's crew served weapons that had ROF. He put smoke on the HMG, broke the light mortar and killed an 8-0, LMG and squad. At that point he elected to start his assault. I think that I would have kept the troops firing in Prep Fire to break and kill the rest of his crew served weapons. Another turn of fire would not have held up the schedule to get to level 2. In hindsight, Bob needed to kill five squads before he advanced over the hill. The squads that he failed to kill on turns 1 through 3 kept him from his objective on turns 4 and 5. Of course both of these observations are safely made while watch the log file at leisure and not by colonels fighting the turn in the moment.

If there is a lesson for ASL Groggnard's it is that in the attack the attacker has to achieve fire superiority before commencing the assault. Second, that the attacker has the initiative and needs to keep his mass together to maintain it. Continuing the assault after the base of fire has collapsed is a risky business. Second, as a defender, try not to give the attacker any Prep Fire targets. Use terrain and space to make the attacker come to you.