

RED BANNER



Quarterly Fanzine of the Capital Area Advanced Squad Leader (ASL) Hobby Club

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Commissar's Call: *Human Wave 2024 in Review*



Thanks to Andy Goldin (event planner), David Wiesenbahn (financial manager/photographer), and John Stadick (tournament director) for planning, organizing, and running a great tournament from 12-14 July, 2024. I counted 20 players in action on July 13 at the Fairfax Marriott in Fair Oaks, Virginia. In addition to familiar faces, we had out-of-towners from as far away as Kentucky and rarely seen locals dicing through four rounds of play. Here's an action shot followed by a view of the prize table.



Conscripts' Chatter: *Starter Kit to ASL*



By David Wiesenbahn

The Starter Kit (SK) system is a great game by itself. It provides the feel of ASL in a streamlined package. For less than \$200, you can buy the first four modules, with scenarios ranging from the Eastern front to the Pacific theater. Including all the expansion packs there are close to 100 scenarios, and MMP is planning on publishing more this year, along with an SK magazine. If you only play SK for the rest of your life, you will have many hours of enjoyment.

But after playing SK for a while, many SK players start to get curious about ASL, especially if they are playing in a club or at a tournament alongside ASL players. SK players will overhear the ASL players talking about snipers, bypass, fire lanes, heat of battle, berserk, and other features that the full game has, and they will start thinking about taking the leap.

The leap is both big and small. If you've played SK, you've learned most of the key concepts of ASL, such as the sequence of phases with each turn, defensive fire, prep fire vs moving, TEM, and routing. The basic turn sequence in ASL is the same as SK, so that shouldn't present much of a problem. When you move up to the full game, look for some of the resources available to make it easier for you. I found a compilation of all the rules that were different between SK and ASL, which helped me focus on specific rules.

For me, the hardest thing to master when I moved up from SK was line of sights in complex terrain. ASL has much more elevation in hills, gullies, depressions, crests, sunken roads, and buildings. The section in the rules for LOS is not long, but it took me a while to master this area. Besides this, I found most of the other rules to be easier to learn, except for the inherent challenge of exceptions to the exceptions to the special cases but not always, rules being spread out in different sections, and edge cases that come up. But that's just inherent in ASL life. Embrace it.

When you first started playing SK, it was intimidating, but eventually you became more comfortable. You will find the same experience if you move up to ASL.

In my opinion, moving to ASL was definitely worth it. The full rules bring a richer, deeper experience. They have brought joy and frustration. Moving up to the full game unlocked a massive range of scenarios. According to the ASL scenario archive, there are almost 10,000 scenarios. I have played scenarios all over the world, from the 1930s to late war to Korea. I've been in desperate street fights with heavy metal in Berlin in April 1945. I've been in Timor, a place I had never heard about. I've blundered my marauders into ambush in the jungle somewhere. I've been the Peruvians battling the Ecuadorians (who knew?). I've been lightly armed paratroopers trying to secure an objective in bocage. I've been in a foxhole in the Ardennes or in the snowy village of Hatten, trying to survive one more day until reinforcements arrive. I've tried to take out a tin can with an ATR in 1940. I've tried assaulting a Russian village over open ground in the summer of 1941.

Another common question is "will I have to unlearn any SK rules when I move to ASL?" In my opinion, the answer is yes and no. It is true that the SK rules are a subset of the ASL rules. With a few exceptions, SK rules are consistent with ASL rules. Players have noted a few inconsistencies but, for the most part, you won't have to unlearn a rule.

However, you will have to unlearn some tactics. Some things that you do in SK will not work well in ASL. When I first started playing ASL, I was still using SK tactics without taking elevation into account. I didn't notice that the enemy MG nest in an upper level of the building, or that the mortar on the hill had a good LOS over my approaching troops, and I paid the price. I got burned by many other tactics that are common in ASL but not in SK.

If you do move up to ASL, start with infantry-only scenarios, just like how you started with SK 1. There are some great choices, such as the classics "Gavin Take" or "The Guards Counterattack." Learn about complex elevation with "Triumph atop Taraldsvikfjell." Then add guns, AFVs, bocage, halftracks, wire, and roadblocks one at a time. If you played the SK scenario "88s at Zon," then play the ASL scenario "Zon With The Wind."

Even with my SK foundation, when I first started ASL, I often felt a bit overwhelmed by what I didn't know. After each game, I would write down a few rules I had trouble with, and then follow up and study those particular areas. Brick by brick, I built my ASL knowledge. A great resource I relied on was the ASL Journals and Annuals. Electronic versions of these are available on Wargame Vault, and over the years, they have had articles focused on certain sections of the rules. If I had some free time, I choose an article and read it. I recently played a game with carriers, which I was unfamiliar with. Before I played my game, I found an article just on this subject. There are also YouTube videos and blogs that provide bite-sized discussion and analysis focused on particular areas of the rules.

The final aspect I'll discuss is the PMC - the personal morale check. My first serious dive into the ASL pool was at ASLOK, and I dove headfirst into the deep end. I wound up playing four games, and my opponents easily had a century of experience between them. They were kind and patient with me. I wound up playing some larger scenarios, and at the end of each game I was both exhilarated and exhausted. But each morning, I showed up at the game room and found another opponent. ASL is a participation sport, and that's the only way to learn.

Another route to ASL is to skip SK and go straight to the big game. That way, you don't have to learn two sets of rules, even if they are closely related. Learning ASL isn't that hard if you are willing to put in the effort and play consistently, and take advantage of the resources available. But starting with SK will allow you to see if you like the game for a relatively small investment of \$32, compared to the over \$200 investment to buy the ASL rule book and *Beyond Valor*.

Amazing ASL Lore: *Rules Beyond the Book*

Some very important ASL rules are NOT defined in the rulebook, but rather outlined in later answers to customer questions. Some of these answers are in fact new interpretations that contravene or contradict, rather than simply clarify, the rules as written. Therefore, the ASL Canon goes beyond the rulebook and players should definitely familiarize themselves with the Q&A found in so many ASL periodicals.

Two common mistakes – fixed by Q&A – stand out. For years, I've seen experienced players, fogged by ambiguities in the rule book, get these critical details wrong...

The FIRST:

Yes, a full squad that lays down a fire line can still fire its inherent fire power at a different target later as first fire.

Q: A9.223: If a unit fires a MG to create a fire lane and then uses its Inherent FP as SFF later, does this cancel the fire lane?

A: A squad can fire its inherent FP as First Fire after previously firing only a MG to lay down a fire lane. A HS that has laid down a firelane (or a squad that has both laid down a firelane and used its inherent FP as First Fire) cannot use SFF unless in a TPBF situation (which cancels the firelane). [An97; Mw]

The SECOND:

Yes, placing a demolition charge causes the placer to lose concealment. This one was particularly tricky because the rules clearly state that “The act of Placing the DC is considered movement” (A23.3) and one can retain concealment if using Assault Movement, but a Q&A indicates this is not the case when placing a DC.

Q: A12.141: Is Placing a DC a “?” loss activity even if the unit is using Assault Movement?”

A: Yes. [An95]

Of course there are more, but that’s for another time.

ATTRAVERSARE LE ALPI

Scenario Design: John Gorkowski



Little Saint Bernard Pass, France, June 21, 1940: To grab some scraps before Germany finished the meal, 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 LAYOUT:

BALANCE:



Exchange one 4-3-7 for a 4-5-7.



Add one 3-4-7 & motorcycle to turn 4 reinforcements.



Only hex rows R-FF inclusive are in play.

Victory Conditions: The Italians win immediately upon amassing 12 VP. Award CVP normally and award EVP for Italian MMC (only) exited off the south map edge on or adjacent to Y10.

TURN RECORD CHART

French Sets Up First	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Italian Moves Up First							

Elements of the 66th Division: Set up in any level three or higher hill hexes.



ELR: 2
SAN: 3

4-3-7	1-2-7	9-1	MMG	INF 37mm 16TR	AP Mines	PB
4	2		2	6 factors		3

Elements of the Alpini Division: enter on turn 1 along the north edge on or within two hexes of Y1.



ELR: 3
SAN: 3

4 ¹ -4-7	9-1	8-0	dm MMG	LMG	dm MTR 45mm	DC
7					2	2

Elements of the Trieste Division: enter on turn 4 along the north edge on or within two hexes of Y1.

3-4-7	8-1	LMG	Squad (Motor) Cycle	Squad (Motor) Cycle Sidecar
5	2		3	2

SCENARIO SPECIFIC RULES:

- EC are moist (B25.5) with overcast (E3.5) weather and a mild breeze blowing from the south west.
- Treat all orchard (B14) as crag (B17). The road running Y1-V3-Y5-V6-X8-Y10 is paved. All other terrain exists as usual for board 25 (F.1-F.2A).
- Pillboxes set up on the map; A12.33 does NOT apply to them.
- For climbing (B11.4) purposes, Italian 4-4-7s and leaders stacked with them are commando (B11.433).

POST SCRIPT: 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.