

# Designer's Notes

## Race to Messina

The rules to *Race to Messina* have gone through their final draft, the counter manifest drawn up, and the map turned in. Development is pretty much over. Playtesting will continue, but few changes are expected at this late date.

The main development problem with the game was that Dick Rustin turned in a design about twice as large as SPI wanted; the game had 370 counters instead of 200, and the equivalent of 16 printed pages of special rules instead of 8. The problem was to reduce the size of the components to a manageable level without destroying the complexity and inherent interest of the game. Working closely with the designer, we managed to cut the counters to 300 and the rules to 8 pages. The cut in counters was less difficult than it appeared at first; some extraneous counters were eliminated by simplifying several systems, more by reducing the number of strength chits. (Both previous *Victory* in the West games, *Operation Grenade* and *Patton's 3rd Army* had more than enough chits; *Race to Messina* will reduce the margin, but should still provide as many chits as are necessary for play.)

Cutting the rules was more difficult, and they went through three drafts (in addition to Rustin's first draft) before both developer and designer were satisfied. Much of the reduction in rules length was accomplished simply by streamlining the rules; by writing them more clearly, with less repetition and a more readable prose style; and by reorganizing them to eliminate repetition and white space. This alone reduced the length to the equivalent of 10 printed pages. The remainder had to come from simplifying the systems and eliminating some chrome.

*Race to Messina* is like the other *Victory* in the West games in that one side holds an essentially impossible situation: The Axis can only defend, defend, and defend, to slow the Allied advance to a minimum and hold Messina as long as possible. Unlike *Operation Grenade*, for example, they have strong units and excellent defensive terrain; the contest is an even one, despite the fact that one side must remain on the defensive for most of the game.

The major interesting feature from the point of view of the players lies in the difference between *Race to Messina* and other *Victory* games: amphibious and airborne operations, special supply rules, a terrain elevation system, amphibious end-runs during the campaign, and air and sea supply. The difficulty from the developer's point of view was to retain all this complexity while simplifying some of the systems in order to make the game more accessible and, at the same time, to fit it within rules length limitations. It took some doing, but I'm eminently satisfied with the results; no major systems were cut and none of the simplifications destroy the rich-

ness of detail of Rustin's original design. I can only hope the players are as happy with *Race to Messina* as I am. *Greg Costikyan*

## Monmouth, or Ney vs. Washington

On June 28th, 1778, near the village of Freehold in Monmouth County, New Jersey, the retrained army of George Washington attacked the rear guard of the British Army as it attempted to change base from Philadelphia to New York. The resulting battle, the longest in the war, was the last major fight in the north. The result — an inconclusive draw.

I have begun development of *Monmouth* and am very excited about the game. It is a game of maneuver in the classic mode — a small, highly trained army against a larger, but less well trained army on a landscape where the flanks of both are hanging and may be easily turned. The British Army is composed of two cavalry (Dragoon) regiments, 8 artillery batteries, and 22 infantry regiments. These troops are well trained, well led and very flexible. The American Army consists of no cavalry, 3 regiments of New Jersey militia (poor quality units), 12 batteries, and 44 regiments of infantry of variable quality. The Americans are divided into three wings: advance, left and right. These wings and the number of commanders involved in such a large army make for a highly rigid and unwieldy army.

In my first playing of the game, I rushed to the attack with the advance wing and found to my dismay that my numbers were effectively neutralized by the morale of the British. My first-wave attack was turned back in disorder; few losses were suffered but my command system was in quite a mess. The British formed into a compact line and began to march up the middle into my main line. I was able to cause disorder in several regiments, but the British didn't pause. The initial British shock attack drew the first blood of the game and sent over a third of my army streaming away in shameful rout. We started the game over.

I am very happy that this game is quite different than *Ney vs. Wellington*, its parent game system, and that it is also enjoyable, to play. The tactics I used in my first game, which were those I use in playing *TSS* system Civil War games, were obviously wrong. An attack in this game must be developed with great attention paid to command and deployment of the reserves. It requires more finesse than *Corinth*, *Cedar Mountain* and other games in the Great Battles of the American Civil War series. While I'm learning to use my army, I'm having a good time. I think most other players will too. *Eric Smith*

## American Civil War: 2nd Edition

*American Civil War: 2nd Edition* has undergone some major changes over the last month. The first prototypes were found to be overly cumbersome and time consuming. Having overshoot the game design target, the next model was cut back substantially in order to allow a sort of "ranging-in" process to take place. With the aid of good playtesting and the system suggestions of Joe Reiser and Richard Berg, the game has been brought to its probable published form.

The number of leaders has been reduced substantially to only those who held major commands. Leaders are now rated for inertia, military skill, rank, and seniority. A player must expend a number of his limited Command Points equal to the leader's inertia rating to activate that leader, thus allowing his command and him to attack. A leader's military skill influences combat, movement, and demoralization recovery. A leader's rank determines how many strength points he may command. The seniority rating indicates a leader's relative position in the hierarchy of his country's officer corps and may influence who commands what. Leader counters no longer double as strength point markers since this was found to be too complicated. Leaders can be purged from the game and in some cases promoted.

Each Game-Turn still represents 3 months, and begins with each player picking a random Command Point chit. The chit will tell each player how many Command Points he has available to spend that turn. After placing reinforcements and checking the supply status of their units, the players begin the Movement/Combat Phase by bidding their Command Points for the opportunity to move first. The highest bidder must spend at least as many Command Points as he bid to activate and move his units and conduct attacks. The second player then activates and moves his units and conducts attacks. After each player has had three opportunities to move and attack, the turn is over and victory conditions are checked.

The game is now undergoing final testing and the rules are being formulated and polished. Eric Smith will be shepherding the game through its final development and into art and editorial. *American Civil War: 2nd Edition* should be available next spring or summer. *Bruce C. Shelley*

## Dreadnought (2nd edition)

It having been decided that *Dreadnought* is to be one of the games to undergo revision and be published in a second edition, I was assigned to do the second edition development. Constraints were that no more than 8 pages of additional rules be added, that the fronts of the counters not be revised, and that the back of the counters be used for something. Unfortunately, there's not much the back of the counters can be used for, so they'll simply be backprinted with color — useful for plotting ship construction under the revised campaign game rules. The back of the game markers will be printed with smoke; smoke markers were left out of the original game for lack of extra counters.

The primary change in the game is the elimination of fire plotting. Instead, players will use a "you move-I move" system, alternating fire from their ships. Movement, alas, is still plotted, as there is no way to allow sequential movement and still produce a situation bearing even a remote resemblance to reality. However, the elimination of fire plotting should speed play considerably.

Some optional special rules have been added, taking into account special capabilities of certain ships — for example, the ability of Japanese "Oi" class cruisers to fire torpedoes, and the inability of British Nelson class dreadnoughts to fire aft.

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The major addition of interest to the players, however, should be the addition of five new historical scenarios and nine extended campaign scenarios. The historical scenarios cover the Heligoland Bight action in August of 1914, postulating that the German battlecruiser fleet had left port in time to influence the outcome of the action; and four scenarios in the Mediterranean during WWII, some hypothetical. The extended campaign rules have been extensively revised, and scenarios of varying degrees of historicity included as well as the abstract scenario present in the original game. These scenarios deal with actual or possible naval wars in the period covered by the game, and I list their names here to give you some idea of what they are like: North Sea Duel, 1914-16; French vs. Austrians in the Med, 1914-15; WWI Grand Campaign; Brits and Yanks, 1919-25 (ahistorical, but allows the players to pit the two greatest fleets against each other); Mussolini's War, 1935; Pacific Battleships, 1939-45; Germans vs. British, 1939-43; Italians vs. British, 1940-42; The Naval War in the West, 1939-45.

If time allows, some Russo-Japanese War scenarios may be added. The difficulty here is that most of the capital ships involved on both sides were pre-dreadnoughts and the current countermix includes none. I would have to do some substantial research, and the pre-dreadnought counters would wind up on the back of, say, WWII American battleships — tacky, but perhaps justifiable in order to add a few extra scenarios.

The last question to be resolved at this point is whether the map sections will be the old-style 10" x 10 1/2", which have to be folded down the middle to fit into the game-box, or new 8 1/2" x 11". The latter is obviously preferable, but may require the production of new plates, an expensive process. We shall soon see. *Greg Costikyan*

## Hot Spots

The emphasis of playtesting on *Hot Spots* has shifted from the first scenario (an Iranian and Iraqi meeting engagement in 1980) to the second scenario which is placed in Iran in 1986. This scenario postulates a Rapid Deployment Force that is equipped with high technology coming up against a Soviet T-72 tank battalion. The US force possesses MPWS (Mobile Protected Weapon System) and LAV (Light Armor Vehicle) armored fighting vehicles; both of these systems are now in the testing stage. Though the US force is outgunned, it has helicopter and air support and is better led than the Soviet force.

The scenario begins with the reconnaissance elements of both sides entering the map on Game-Turn 1, with the rest of the forces entering on Game-Turns 2 and 3. Game-Turn 4 would probably go something like this: The Soviet battalion commander has been receiving reports for the last hour of contact with the enemy forces. He decides to initiate a formation change from a movement to contact into a hasty assault (the Soviets are on an offensive mission); chances for success are 45 percent. Due to the various friction of war factors (mostly lack of good intelligence),

this attempt fails.

The US commander having identified the Soviet axis of advance, has already changed his formation into a hasty defense. His indirect support (mortars and artillery) open fire on the identified Soviet positions, causing widespread suppression. Meanwhile, the US maneuver elements move and trigger enemy opportunity fire when sighted. The US commander reassesses his position at this time and decides to "dig in," modifying his formation into a deliberate defense; he has an 83 percent chance of passing the check and succeeds.

The Soviets then conduct similar types of action (indirect fire followed by movement and direct fire). At the conclusion of the Soviet player's actions, the fourth Game-Turn ends.

The preceding comments relate the key events that are undertaken during a player-turn. The crucial action centers on the ability of a player to modify his force structure to allow for maximum utilization of all the available forces. This particular scenario ended in a US victory. The Soviet attack stalled due to the "dug in" nature of the US positions; a successful counterattack was later launched from these positions which broke the morale of the Soviet force and eventually resulted in their withdrawal off the map. Playtesting continues: more next time...

*Mark Herman*

## Battle over Britain

This game is finally out of my office and in the hands of art and production. I have been working on it off and on for the past two years and am very proud of the results. During that time I had the pleasure of reading and re-reading a number of excellent books on the subject. Just in case there is no room for a bibliography in the printed rules, I'd like to mention a few of them here.

From a game design and hard information viewpoint, Francis K. Mason's *Battle over Britain* (Doubleday, 636 pp.) is a goldmine. The book includes a complete day-by-day account of the entire campaign with details on every single aircraft destroyed or damaged on both sides. Other features include an account of the German air raids in World War I, the development of the opposing air forces between the wars, and numerous orders of battle and appendices. On top of this, the book is excellently written, giving colorful, accurate accounts of all facets of the conflict. Unfortunately, the book is hard to find.

*The Hardest Day* by Alfred Price (Scribners, 246 pp.) is a complete account of one day (Aug. 18, 1940) of the Battle of Britain. On that day, over 130 aircraft were destroyed. The author discusses every raid from an eyewitness viewpoint, using them as examples of the overall conduct of the battle. Good order of battle information, casualty listings and maps of each raid make the book a valuable research source. I used three raids described in *The Hardest Day* as scenarios in the Combat Game of *Battle over Britain*.

*Fighter* by Len Deighton (Ballantine, 311 pp.) recreates the feel of the battle and the period beautifully. The political, military and technical developments that led to and affected the campaign are described. The

British and German personalities that participated in or directed the battle are featured. How they affected the Battle of Britain, and how it affected them makes fascinating reading. From a game design viewpoint, the book is light on hard data.

*Fly for Your Life* by Larry Forrester (Bantam, 368 pp.) has little to offer to the researcher but is a great read, being the exploits of British fighter ace, R.S. Tuck. The book covers his entrance into the RAF, his numerous amazing air engagements during the Battle of Britain, his capture and internment by the Germans, and his escape into and out of Russia.

*Battle over Britain* is due out at the end of the year and will include a 22" x 34" game-map, a 17" x 22" British Airfield Display, a German Raid Display, an 11" x 34" dividing screen with all the important charts and tables, 600 counters and 40 pages of rules and logs. *John H. Butterfield*

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