

# UP

COMMENTS BY BOB ALDRIDGE

# SCOPE!

(As counterpoint to Tony Jones' review Bob here examines certain aspects of the game design; more particularly research. Whilst he is critical of some of the research and the way it has been presented in the game he also highlights some of the problems in carrying out background research for game design. I feel that this is a worthwhile article on an aspect of the game that cannot be criticised by such landlubbers as myself, Editor).

There have not been many submarine games published to date, Avalon Hill brought out *U-Boat* over ten years ago, *Battleline* issued *Submarine* a couple of years back and now SPI have presented *Up Scope*.

Of the two games comprising the latter, this article will deal solely with the non-contemporary game, covering the period up to 1945. As far as the game system is concerned *Up Scope* is undoubtedly the most realistic to date without being too complex. Hand in hand with realism goes technical detail and in this respect the game has not matched the standard set by the game system. It is fairly easy to show that someone, somewhere, has gone badly astray when it comes to collecting and presenting the vital information upon which the game relies.

Included in the game is a booklet that is crammed with ship and weapon statistics and according to SPI it contains complete information on every significant submarine, anti-submarine vessel and weapon employed between 1914 and the present day, allowing for weeks of study and learning. For the purpose of demonstrating that this information cannot be regarded as 100% reliable we shall examine just one of the twenty-seven tables of data, Table 11.23, Great Britain Submarine Statistics.

This table gives the following information about nine different groups of boats for the period 1905 to 1939:-

- (a) Date of entry into service.
- (b) Surface and submerged speeds, given in movement points.
- (c) Gunnery Effectiveness.
- (d) Durability Value.
- (e) Maximum Safe Diving Depth, given in Depth Levels in which Level 0 represents the surface, Level 1 periscope depth, about 60 feet, and subsequent levels increase the depth by about 120 feet per level.
- (f) Number and location of torpedo tubes.
- (g) Total number of torpedoes available.

Now before we venture further we must digress into the subject of research. It is extremely easy to discover a so-called error, take a quick look at the nearest reference book to confirm it, dash off a triumphant letter to a magazine that proved that the XYZ co. are utter idiots, and await the applause. At this moment there are four reference books open in front of me and as far as the WW1 British 'E' class boat is concerned, NONE of them agree as to the composition of the armament, neither do they agree about the speed, surfaced or submerged. In this case the reason is simple. Some 'E' boats carried a gun, some did not. Some had two beam torpedo tubes, some had only one. Some carried reloads for the beam tubes, some didn't, and so on. It is easy, therefore, to visualise the dilemma in which SPI found themselves when faced with assembling information on all classes of British submarine into about eight square inches of table. They had a big problem, which unfortunately they proved unable to deal with effectively.

To go into complete detail would take many sheets of paper and make tedious reading so we will take a look at only one of the nine submarine groups in Table 11.23. It is the biggest group in the table, comprising thirteen classes that are all supposed to have entered service in 1905. All these classes share the same statistics, they are identical. They are:- A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, M, R, S, V and W.

Any suggestion that they are the same is complete balderdash. It might well be reasoned that no-one would wish to play any home-brewed WW1 game, therefore it would be all right to put any old nonsense down. If the information is put down, however, then the player has every right to expect it to bear some resemblance to reality and not be a product of the designer's fevered imagination.

With regard to the dates of entry into service, the true dates range from 1903 to 1918. This matters, you would look pretty silly using an 'R' boat any time before 1918 for example. The speeds stand up all right to examination. Taking into account the fact that no two reference books appear to agree on them we find that only one minor correction is necessary, the 'R' boat speeds should be interchanged. Otherwise all the remaining classes fall within the limits of the game system. Similarly, the maximum safe diving depth, which works out at 180 feet approx. is a reasonable figure for WW1 boats, so again everything is within the game system.

The gunnery effectiveness is rather more touchy. Classes A, B, C and S had no guns at any time, so they are wrong. Some of the D, E, H and R classes did, some didn't. The remainder usually did but it is not uncommon to come across photographs of a particular boat showing it having a gun at one time and not at another. But we can certainly rule out classes A, B, C and S.

It is not really possible to comment on the Durability Value, but it is possible to compare the values of different boats and the value shown seems to be all right for the average WW1 boat. Perhaps the 'M' class might have been raised to 4, it is a matter of opinion.

The whole group is shown to have an armament of two bow torpedo tubes with a total of four torpedoes. This is rubbish. Although this applies to a number of boats in the group it does not apply to the majority.

By now you will not be surprised to learn that references differ on the subject but the consensus of opinion seems to be that :- Classes A, B, C, S, V and W are as per table, i.e. two bow tubes. Classes D and F have two bow and one stern tube. Classes E and G have two bow, two beam and one stern.

Classes H and M have four bow tubes. Class R has six bow tubes.

All of the above tubes are 18" with the exception of the later H boats which had 21" tubes and the stern tube of the G class, which, according to one source, was 21" also.

Although the game has no provision for beam tubes in the rules this can be easily arranged.

It will not have escaped notice that there is a wide variation between the above figures and the 'official' SPI 'two bow tubes'. It is not a very good show and this for one group of thirteen boats in the table. To put it bluntly, the player who wishes to be fairly certain that the ships and weapons he is using in the game have some resemblance to the real thing is going to have to sit down and do some work straightening it out first. For many, no doubt, it will be much easier to forget all about it and play it as it stands. The player, whether he takes the part of the surface ships or submarine(s), has a lot of work to do in the game and may not want to burden himself with yet more work just to correct a number of old-fashioned submarines that he will probably never use in a game.

The final column in the table is the total number of torpedoes available. Yet again, the record books vary considerably. The 'E' boats usually carried four bow reloads, one stern reload and sometimes a reload for each of the beam tubes and I have seen a photo of one carrying three torpedoes lashed to the casing in front of the conning tower.

It is on record that the 'H' class totalled six torpedoes, as for the rest, if you allow one reload for each tube you will not be too far wrong. Guesswork admittedly, and if anyone has more definite information I should be pleased to hear from them.

We have looked at one group out of one table. The remaining groups are not faultless either. As for the other twenty-six tables, who can say? To be fair to SPI, to compile tables giving complete information about every class and every variation within that class would be an impossible task. However, surely it was possible to ensure that where information was given, it was right.

When SPI said, "allows for weeks of study and learning" perhaps it was their intention that we learn from their mistakes as we put them right, because in putting them right you do learn an awful lot.

To sum up, as a confirmed naval wargamer with distinct leanings towards submarines, I think that the game is great but that the statistics could be better. And now, I have another twenty-six tables to look at .....

[11.23] Great Britain Submarine Statistics

Date	Class	SrS	SbS	Gun	Dur	MSD	Tubes	Tpo
1/05	A,B,C,D,E,F,G H,M,R,S,V,W	3	2	2	3	2	2B	4
1/17	J,K,L	4	2	3	4	3	4B,2S	12
1/16	Nautilus, Swordfish	4	2	3	2	2	4B,2S	12
1/27	O,P,R	3	2	3	4	2	6B,2S	13
1/33	Thames	5	2	3	5	3	6B,2S	13
1/34	Porpoise	4	2	3	5	3	6B	13
1/33	S	3	2	3	5	3	6B,1B*	13
1/39	T	3	2	3	5	3	6B,5B*	17
1/39	U,V	3	2	3	5	3	4B	8

\* External Tubes (cannot be reloaded)

