

YOUR MOVE!

A Newsletter for SPI Gamers

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February, 1972, Jim Dunnigan kicked off a new magazine, promising "MOVES will also provide a forum for [SPI] games...." The discussion continues 50 years on!

Welcome to "Your Move"

Fifty Years ago? Really? February, 1972, Jim Dunnigan kicked off a new magazine, and for 60 issues—10 years—it did all that he promised and more. But the void left by MOVES' demise, and the failure to bring it back hurt us all.

My goal is to continue that discussion. I will pull together articles on great SPI Games, and invite your contributions! Is it simply nostalgia? I think not - 29 people entered the **Blue & Gray** Tourney that ended in January after almost 50 games played. My SPIGames.net website get 5000+ hits a month. The Facebook SPI Games group has thousands of members. *This is about gaming.* Tell me what you think after reading these articles. I look forward to the discussion! rgifford@spigames.net

Who Needs a Newsletter?

People who still enjoy SPI's great games.

- ⇒ Readers who will enjoy seeing these games again, either in play, or in discussion.
- ⇒ The 5000+ SPI Gamers who visit spigames.net looking for old info and important new article offerings about SPI Games.
- ⇒ Gamers looking for opponents — face to face, by email, or via tournaments.

"In the age of the Internet, who needs a newsletter? You!

If you have missed the great SPI games, or are still looking for opponents, this newsletter is for you."

— RHG

The Games of SPI, 1972:

By Russ Gifford

1971 was the 'Great Leap Forward' for the new company SPI. 1969 and 1970 games were the plucky but rudimentary **Test Series Games**. These were little more than playtest kits—unmounted counters printed on regular or colored paper. The rules were typewritten, but the copies were generated on low quality copiers of the era. The tables featured lines added after with a ruler and pen, and any diagrams in the rules sported hand-drawn elements with freehand arrows pointing to the item under discussion. Only the maps were of good artistic quality—but they were strictly black ink on thin white paper. Cost *was certainly* an object!

But they sold, and they added another group the next year. Of the 14 or 15 they generated, in 1971 five would eventually be re-created with mounted counters, type-set rules, and maps printed on thicker paper, usually with a grey or brown color for the base. Some would get blue ink added for rivers! These new games would graduate from the **TSG** (Test Series Games) to become part of the **SSG** (Simulation Series Games) stage of SPI. ([Learn more on TSGs here](#) or [here](#))

Specifically, **Korea**, **Leipzig**, **Barbarossa**, **Normandy**, and **1918** would make that leap. **Tactical Game #3** had already been sold to The Avalon Hill Game Company, and Jim Dunnigan and Redmond Simonsen had created the iconic **PanzerBlitz** using TAHGC's deeper pockets to make it shine: 5/8 inch mounted counters, with RAS's flare for silhouettes for all the vehicles. His work on the maps gave us the now common 'geomorphic' boards—which may or may not have already been in production with SPI's long delayed **Strategy I** game. But his added work on the scenario cards was also an outstanding touch. All these features would exist in the hobby for the rest of its life! They also sold the **France 1940** game to TAHGC, which had seen print in S&T issue 27.

So in their first 18 months, they had rescued S&T, which had been on its way down for the last time when Chris Wagner gave it over to Jim Dunnigan for \$1. They started publishing games in each issue; within a year tripled the subscribers, made it a high quality magazine, and moved to mounted counters. They launched their new SSG line, which also gave us the new **Kursk** game system for WWII—offering a second movement/combat phase for mech units. Another innovation that still lives.

Thus, in 1972, SPI was ready to roar. They kicked off what is to many, the beginning of the 'Golden Era' of SPI Games. It started rough—**Combat Command** was a bust, but that was the only one. **Flying Circus** was exciting, and fast.

(Continued page 4)

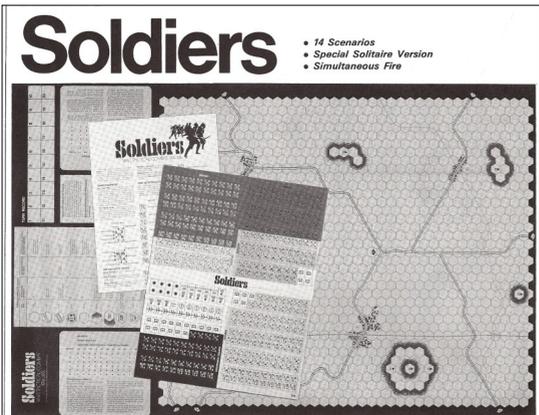
The Games of SPI, 1972:

Published	Name	Subheader
01-Jan-72	COMBAT COMMAND (In S&T 30)	Tactical Combat in Europe, 1944
01-Feb-72	TURNING POINT: BATTLE OF STALIN-GRAD	Soviet Winter Offensive, 1942
01-Mar-72	FLYING CIRCUS (In S&T 31)	Tactical Aerial Combat, 1915-1918
01-May-72	BORODINO (In S&T 32)	Napoleon in Russia, 1812
01-Jun-72	SOLDIERS	Tactical Combat, 1914-15
01-Jun-72	MOSCOW CAMPAIGN	Strike and Counterstrike: Russia, 1941
01-Jun-72	FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR	1 August to 2 September 1870
01-Jul-72	WINTER WAR (In S&T 33)	The Russo-Finnish Conflict November 1939 - March 1940
01-Aug-72	MARNE, THE	Home Before the Leaves Fall
01-Sep-72	ARMAGEDDON (In S&T 34)	Tactical Combat, 3000 to 500 B.C.
01-Sep-72	LA GRANDE ARMÉE	The Campaigns of Napoleon in Central Europe 1805, 1806, 1809
01-Sep-72	1812	The Campaigns of Napoleon in Russia
01-Nov-72	YEAR OF THE RAT (In S&T 35)	The Communist Spring Offensive in Vietnam, 1972
01-Nov-72	BREAKOUT & PURSUIT	The Battle for France, 1944
01-Nov-72	RED STAR/WHITE STAR	Tactical Combat in Western Europe in the 1970's
01-Nov-72	WILDERNESS CAMPAIGN	Lee vs. Grant, 1864
01-Nov-72	AMERICAN REVOLUTION	1775 - 1783

(Games of 1972 - Continued from Page 2)

Turning Point (Renamed at TAHGC's threat to sue over ownership of the name Stalingrad!) was good, but nothing earth shattering. While some elements were new, it was still something that had been seen before.

The Battle of Borodino, though. Now we are moving solidly into the classics territory. This game is as good in 2022 as it was in 1972. Three individual day scenarios, and 1 campaign game tying them all together. The rules are clean, and only a couple of simple yet elegant optional rules to make certain the players respect the situation Napoleon and other general faced. The Imperial Guard Optional rules should likely be used. Otherwise the game will be the typical cardboard generalship that committed every paper strength point regardless of the consequences.



Soldiers, however, is that 'something new' that had never been tried before. It is individual company setups. This is completely outside the box thinking. Had it been set in WWII, would the history of wargaming changed?

Franco Prussian War, and **The Wilderness Campaign**, bring about a totally new, and very exciting fog of war system. With **Winter War**, SPI creates another

classic. But the hits just keep coming. **1812** is the opposite of a classic—a completely new creation—actually two games in one, but pointing to the importance of supply in the Napoleonic era. They ended the year with **Breakout & Pursuit**, creating yet another long lived favorite. And **Red Star White Star** applied the PanzerBlitz concept to modern times. It was only the beginning!

In the end, 1972 would produce 18 games. In a year, SPI had created a decade's worth of product for Avalon Hill. The impact would last far longer than a decade!

Why a Tournament?

By Russ Gifford

Around the first of January, I sent a notice that Stephen Oliver had wrapped up the SPI Blue and Gray Tournament. Elsewhere in this newsletter are the score sheet and final position at the end of the tourney! But what good are tournaments?

1 – Tournaments (and Fests) get people to PLAY GAMES.

In the past 6 months I have sent out HUNDREDS of potential matchups based on similar game requests. I know a few people have taken the initiative and started playing. However, simply announcing this TOURNAMENT moved 30 people to actually SIT DOWN AND PLAY, and CONTINUED to playing each round. Most stayed through December, and a few into January. **Tournaments make it HAPPEN.**

2 – Tournaments give you a LOT of experience very quickly.

Part of that is by giving you the chance to TRY a strategy, and find out the results. And then, try that game again, and apply those lessons. ‘How can ANYONE LOSE Cemetery Hill as the UNION??’ Well, a few people in this tourney LEARNED what the CSA MUST do to have a shot at a win. And that same thing happens in every game. I often hear people grouching about this or that game being ‘unbalanced.’ It might be. Or it might be they have not found the key strategy or tactics that the Play-testers saw when *they* played it. And that comes with EXPERIENCE.



A snapshot in time—a scene from the VASSAL SPI Blue & Gray tournament that finished in January, 2022, with 29 players. Read more about the Tourney on page 3! And there is still time to enter the Napoleonic Tourney! See the note on page 2!

3 – Tournaments give you feedback. Instant Feedback in the form of a report card.

By their nature, a tournament gives you a general idea of 'where you rank' in a group of players. Some hate that. Is it accurate to say I was the WORST player in this tourney? No but it IS where I ranked in THAT TOURNAMENT at that moment, with choices I made. Meaning, you can use the results as a goad to push yourself a little harder, to try to improve on that result.

Why does that matter? Because it means you can judge if you are learning anything. And like any other goal, even a modest movement TOWARD a goal is a reward, and reinforces good behaviors. Plus, it just 'feels good' when you KNOW you are LEARNING something. 'Those three reasons are more than enough to say why I think tournaments are a good use of your time. But I will give you another:

4 – You now have new friends, and potential opponents.

Others focus only on the competitive aspects of a tournament – and if competition make you uncomfortable, I get that. No one says you HAVE to play in a tourney. But there is more to it than "did I WIN?" Think about this:

In our last tourney, you met 29 other guys you could play. I'd wager most of you didn't know more than one of the others. Some found out they had some opponents living NEARBY via this tourney. For SIX MONTHS, you had the ability to play an old game series you in an environment RICH with opponents.

And better yet – six months later – each player could, if they wanted, draw on those other players as a potential source for an opponent, without any help from me. A simple note: "We met in the B&G tourney. Want to try (name of game?)" THAT, my friends, has an immense value.

And to wrap up the values of a tournament:

5 – You have an achievement to give you comfort.

You faced down those who claim old games are only an exercise in nostalgia. You faced the naysayers that claim the good times are all in the past. You faced the doubts in your own mind that asks 'why do I still have these games?' You faced the coming darkness, lit a flare, and said, "Screw it – I am going to make this happen!" And how you feel about that part has NOTHING to do with how you scored or finished in the tournament.

The person at the bottom of the tournament still finished above everyone that did not play at all. Congratulations for making an effort to push the envelope and pursue your hobby.

Blue & Gray Tourney Results!

June 20, 2021—January 20, 2022

Official	LNAME	FNAME	Score	Losses	Played
	1 Oliver	Stephen	4	0	4
	2-9 Waxtel	David	4	-1	5
	2-9 Purman	Paul	3	-1	4
	2-9 Grills	Joe	2	-2	4
	2-9 Kadtko	James	2	-2	4
	2-9 Ilioff	Doug	3	-2	5
	2-9 Schmuck	Alan	3	-2	5
	2-9 Larsen	David	3	0	3
	2-9 Groves	Steve	3	0	3
	10-15 DeWitt	Omar	2	-2	4
	10-15 Toupy	Pascal	2	-2	4
	10-15 Schaeffer	Mark	2	-2	4
	10-15 White	Sheldon	2	-3	5
	10-15 Snarski	Erica	2	-3	5
	10-15 W- Hansen v. JWhite		2	-2	4
	16-24 Hay	William	1	0	1
	16-24 Martenis	Paul	1	-1	2
	16-24 Morford	Chuck	1	-1	2
	16-24 Riley	William	1	-2	3
	16-24 Daley	Mark	1	-2	3
	16-24 Ridenour	Bruce	1	-3	4
	16-24 Cozzi	Andrew	1	-3	4
	16-24 L-Hansen v. JWhite		1	-3	4
	16-24 Sheppard	Dennis	1	-3	4
	25-28 Greenley	Ross	0	-3	3
	25-28 Polk	Patrick	0	-2	2
	25-28 Goss	Mark	0	-1	1
	25-28 Barry	Wayne	0	-1	1
	29 Gifford	Russell	1	-1	2

The SPI Blue & Gray 2021 tournament concluded in January, after 29 players crossed swords!

The result? Stephen Oliver came out on top with a perfect score of 4 wins and no losses!

Eight other players tied for second place, while an additional 6 came in on the next tier level!

Players completed 49 games

Below are the results by game, stated in Union wins vs Confederate wins.

Want in on the excitement? The next tournament—this time a Napoleonic Quad Game Fest is just starting!

Click here for details! [Link](#)

Game	USA	CSA	Union Win %
Antietam	6	2	75.0%
Battle of the Wilderness	2	0	100.0%
Cemetery Hill	5	3	62.5%
Chattanooga	2	1	66.7%
Chickamauga	8	5	61.5%
Fredericksburg	2	0	100.0%
Shiloh	4	7	36.4%
Road to Richmond	0	1	0.0%
Total Games Completed	29	19	60.4%

Join the SPI Opponent Finder Service!

Looking for Opponents? Try the SPI Opponent Finder! [Join here!](#)

Benefits of SPI Opponents Finder:

- ◆ You can use the SPI Google map to find opponents anytime! [Map](#)
- ◆ As a member, others can find you via this service. [How it works](#)



Whenever someone joins, if their interests match yours, or they are in your region, you and they will get an email inviting you to connect and play. OR you can request a match [here](#)

- ◆ You can update your listing and thus automatically generate a new match listing ANYTIME you wish! Just update your listing [here!](#)
- ◆ You will get a yearly update of all members and all the games they play.
- ◆ You will get notices of SPI tournaments or Fests I am offering

If you are not a member yet - [join here!](#)

When you join, you generally get 2 emails within 48 hours:

- 1 -- the welcome with a list of players 'near' you - (a rather loose definition of near)
- 2 - an email to ALL players that have listed the games YOU listed in your choices.

New Tourney Launching!



This 2022 GameFest pairs players in games of **Napoleon At War** or **Napoleon's Last Battles**. The games are played via VASSAL Log Exchange but there is still time to join! More info here: [Click this link](#)

Tourney Rules

[1.0] This tourney uses VASSAL modules to play, and exchange VASSAL logs to make the moves.

[1.2] **OPTIONAL** If you and your opponent *mutually* agree, you can choose to play head to head (live) on the VASSAL server.

[1.3] We will require use of an outside die roller.

[2.0] **Matching:** Players declare which of the available games they wish to play, and I match them with an opponent that lists similar choices.

[3.0] **Victory Conditions:** This is a Fest, not a Tournament. The difference: A fest is *not* structured to match players to determine a 'winner.'

[3.1] A Fest simply matches players. Thus, there really are no 'rounds' - and no need for me to determine if this match meets a score group criteria.

[3.2] In a Fest, if two people are available, I will match them!

[3.3] Players may continue playing as long as I have opponents to match.

“But I don’t use VASSAL”

Perhaps this is the time to learn?

This tourney is open to players new to VASSAL.

Face it—we play complex games. Other people see our rule books and shiver in fear. Did any of us ever think, “Oh I can’t learn that game! That’s too difficult.” So why don’t we want to tackle VASSAL?

[Learning to use VASSAL:](#)

[Getting Started—Saving vlog and vsav files.](#)

WHAT IS THIS???

That is a good question. I did not get up Friday morning with the intention of creating a newsletter. It simply 'happened.' This issue was literally 'off the fingers.' No planning, no thought—simply inspiration.

Welcome to '*Your Move*' - an attempt to bring together SPI game enthusiasts with games and stories. I am hoping to use it to promote more gaming.

But while my website spigames.net gets 5000 unique visits a month with a quarter million pages accessed a year, it does not create a community.

In an effort to create that community, I launched the SPI Opponent Finder service a few years ago. At this writing, I have 300 SPI gamers than have placed a pin in the map in hopes of finding other players.

It has worked for many—but there is no place for them to come together.

The Facebook pages are as close as it comes for a community—but Facebook like all online services are ephemeral at best—the more activity, the faster any notice gets buried. Plus, Facebook is anathema to many—and not without reason. I would not be there if not for the SPI Games site.

So it all comes down to 'what can we do to make things happen?' It is possible. The recent SPI **Blue & Gray** tournament proved that. The tourney jumped from a 'mention' to reality with 4 then 14 then 24 players in a week. It concluded 7 months later with 49 games played. The same is happening with the **Napoleon at War** GameFest—it had 16 committed players on announcement, and 24 within a day. We are at 28 players a week later.

So there is an interest in SPI. How do we push it to action?

Well, that is my goal with *Your Move* - to give me a place to note coming events, to promote consideration of games, and perhaps, stick a pin in a point in time. To find readers that will be drawn to the articles, the events, and the pictures. Each issue will 'recycle one article from the SPIGames.net website or from my posts at FB ('Why a Tourney?' in this issue.) There will be at least two advertisements (the Nap Game Fest and the SPI Opponent Finder are the ads this time.)

I do not know if this is a quarterly or bimonthly newsletter. Much depends on the enthusiasm with which it is met.

ADDENDUM

So, what is this 'newsletter' thing, Russ? People don't do newsletters today. They do Podcasts, they yak at you, and people pay them to do so.

Yeah, no, not me.

It simply hit me that *Moves* first appeared in February of 1972. And what an impact it had on my life. For most people, that was the *S&T*, but for me, it was *Moves*.

Isn't that mind blowing to think about the impact as I look back over my life, and the actions I have taken? That sounds odd—well, I am odd. But where *S&T* was about the history, which I enjoyed, *Moves* spoke to me of the play of the games. Of the strategy and tactics on the board. Of variations that could be tried, of improving your play. That reached me as a kid coming to wargames from chess, where you had books of games, and stories of great tournaments. In those books, you could peer over the shoulders of the giants of the game, and learn from their moves.

In wargames, you were peering over the shoulders of the Generals—and SPI provided games that taught you the things the Generals paid attention to. They taught you the history of the battle, merged with the reality of time, distance, leadership, and luck. But SPI games threw in the dirt of supply, of mud, and of the inability to truly transmit your orders over a distance. Thus, the importance of training, of esprit de corps, and of luck.

But as I soaked up all that, *Moves* gave me hope. The writers were guys like me, giving you the straight dope on the play of the game. So in *Moves*, there was also a hope of finding others like yourself, and opponents.

Who knew it would take half a century?

But you also heard from the adults in the room. Simonsen, primarily, and Dunnigan. Isby now and then. They spoke of simply what they were doing. And the primary thing they were doing? MAKING THINGS HAPPEN. Games. Then a company. Then tournaments, Conventions. Books. And every month, another magazine.

I .. can't really grasp it - or how much of an impact that subtle 'just do it' attitude had on my life. But I have followed it since then.

This is my thank you to those true giants who allowed us to watch as they changed the world, to RAS, JFD, and all the rest. It is possible. Just do it.

