

# Panzergruppe Guderian, The Battle of Smolensk, July 1941

*Wargame Replay by George Nap*



This is my first solitaire go at PGG, a game which somehow escaped my notice when it was first published. I obtained a copy for a reasonable price last year and finally got it to the table.

This game is considered a classic with breakthrough concepts in wargaming, including untried units for the Soviets whose strengths are not revealed until the moment of combat, some evaporate and some stand like iron.

I have no preconceived notion of how this battle progressed on the operational level. I have read some literature on the game and there is apparently a defense which involves turning Smolensk into an impregnable strongpoint. I will not attempt this defense, but will play to learn the flow of the game and am very interested in how the hidden unit strengths will impact the game.

Soviet Turn 1



The 16th and 19th Armies are released on rolls of 1 and 3 respectively. The 13th and 20th Armies bravely retrograde and we will seek to build a defensive line between Vitebsk and Smolensk. I am assuming the generals do not retreat ten hexes, but stay with their armies.

German Turn 1



German divisions wheel south attacking Soviet forces in the Orsha area. Strong Soviet units are revealed and the German forces make little headway. An envelopment is begun.

Soviet Turn 2



Units in the Orsha area counterattack. The 117th Infantry Division, a strong unit, is entangled in German zones of control and the entire 13th Army counterattacks the 17th Panzer Division. Armies form a defense in the Vitebsk area, but the southern flank is worrisome. Strong units are revealed, but the attack goes in at 1:1 and results in an A2, the Soviets retreat.

German Turn 2



Attempting to pocket the fleeing Soviet 13th Army. Destroying the 117th Division outside of Orsha. Attacks in the north bounce on an A1/D1.

Soviet Turn 3



The Red Army continues to resist. Vietbsk is strong but both flanks are in the air with strong German forces flanking north and South. We will execute a withdrawal in the face of expected German reinforcements to keep from being pocketed. The 13th Army will pull back in the south and the 22nd Army will strike in the north. Attacks go in and cause some step losses.

German Turn 3



We will continue to push around the Soviet flanks, our reinforcements will move into position to pin the Soviet center. We will look for opportunities for overruns on the few isolated Soviet units. The 13th Army loses two divisions and their leader to a concentric attack by three panzer divisions and a mech division. One Soviet division dies in an exchange near Velizh.

#### Soviet Turn 4



Counterattacks in the north and south are mildly successful inflicting a step loss on the 19th Panzer which could not retreat. Our attacking units retreat to defensive positions (two A1/D1 results).

#### German Turn 4

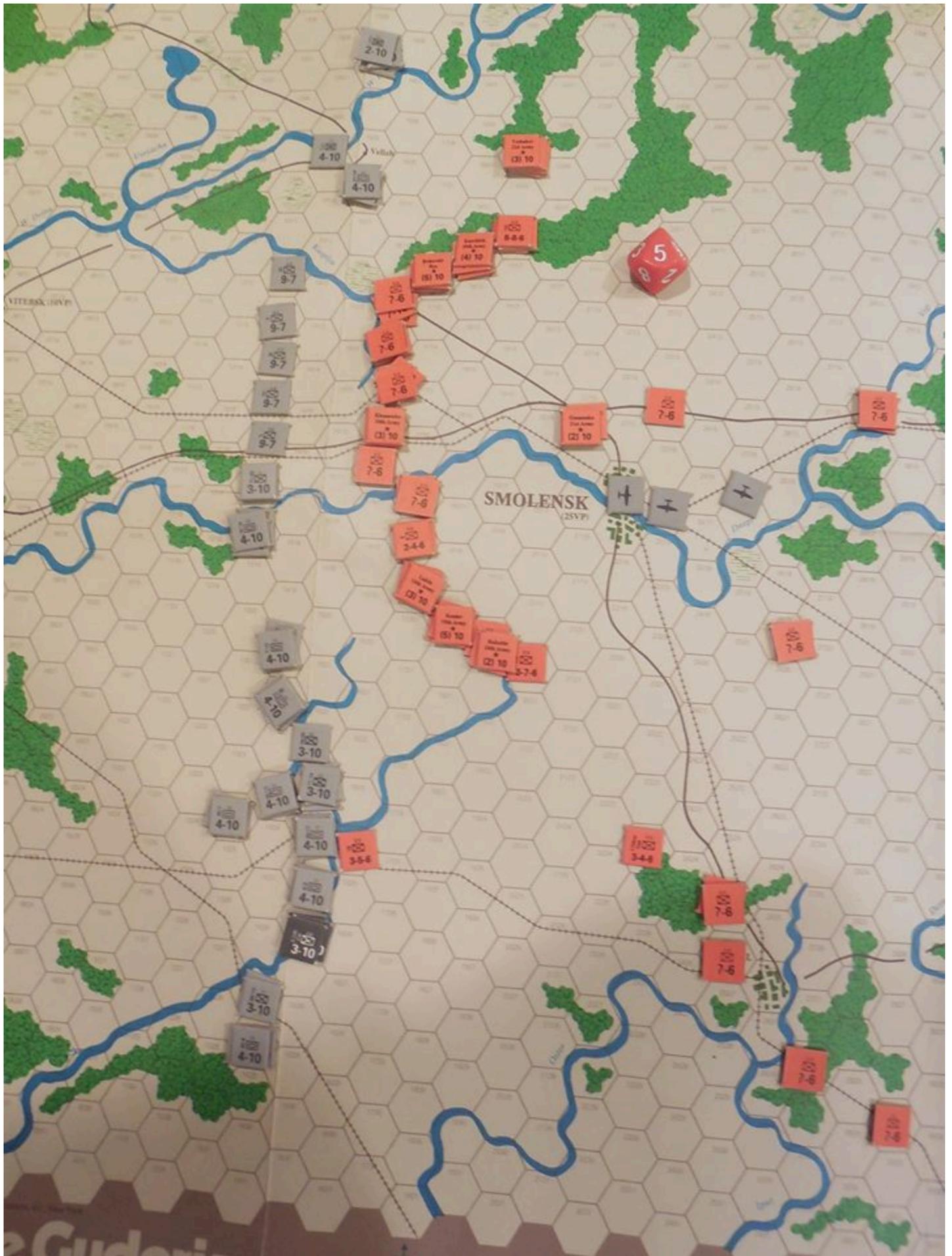




The rest of the 13th Army is eliminated, pocketed and overrun during the movement phase. The follow on attacks fail to shatter the Soviet defenses, we continue to lap around their flanks. All of our major units are on the map and moving to contact. (Except for the damn cavalry.)

*Interlude: I was summoned to dinner (a nice leafy salad with plump plum tomatoes and a vinaigrette dressing followed by a frittata) and decided that, as the Germans, I needed to proceed with more haste and less care. I thought about hitting the far ends of the Soviet lines with overruns and then using that momentum to surround and shatter stacks of Soviets. Alas, since this is a solitaire game, I thought of it prior to the Soviet turn and will make adjustments to mitigate the damage of such a move.*

Soviet Turn 5



SMOLENSK  
(25VP)



2-10  
4-10  
4-10

9-7  
9-7  
9-7  
9-7  
9-7  
3-10  
4-10

4-10  
4-10  
3-10  
3-10  
4-10  
4-10  
4-10  
4-10  
3-10  
4-10

8-8  
14-10  
7-6  
7-6  
7-6  
7-6  
3-10  
7-6  
2-6  
7-6  
2-4  
5-10  
5-10  
5-7-4

7-6  
7-6

3-4-4

7-6  
7-6

7-6  
7-6

Gideri

We pull back and consolidate, trying to extend flanks without weakening the center. The 19th Division remains adjacent to two panzer divisions defending hex 1624. We will not attack, forcing them to use movement points to eliminate these heroes.

German Turn 5



Soviet flanks pull back, but we will strike all along the Soviet defenses. This is my first play of this game and I do not know the distribution of defense factors within the Soviet forces. It is time to find out. A general advance is ordered, we will try to roll the flanks and break the center.



The outcome. Soviet lines south of the Dnepr are sundered, several units in contact and ready to be gobbled up next turn.

Soviet Turn 6



Some valuable units are stuck in contact with the Germans. We will counterattack selectively. We must avoid being pocketed but have lost three generals already and cannot afford to lose two more. The attacks go in with mixed results. We built a line using reinforcements, rail movement and retreating on A1/D1 results. Here comes the boom.

German Turn 6

Time for some overruns and flanking attacks. The Soviet screen south of Smolensk is brittle and we will attempt to shatter it. The Soviets lose several generals and their line south of Smolensk is sundered.

Soviet Turn 7

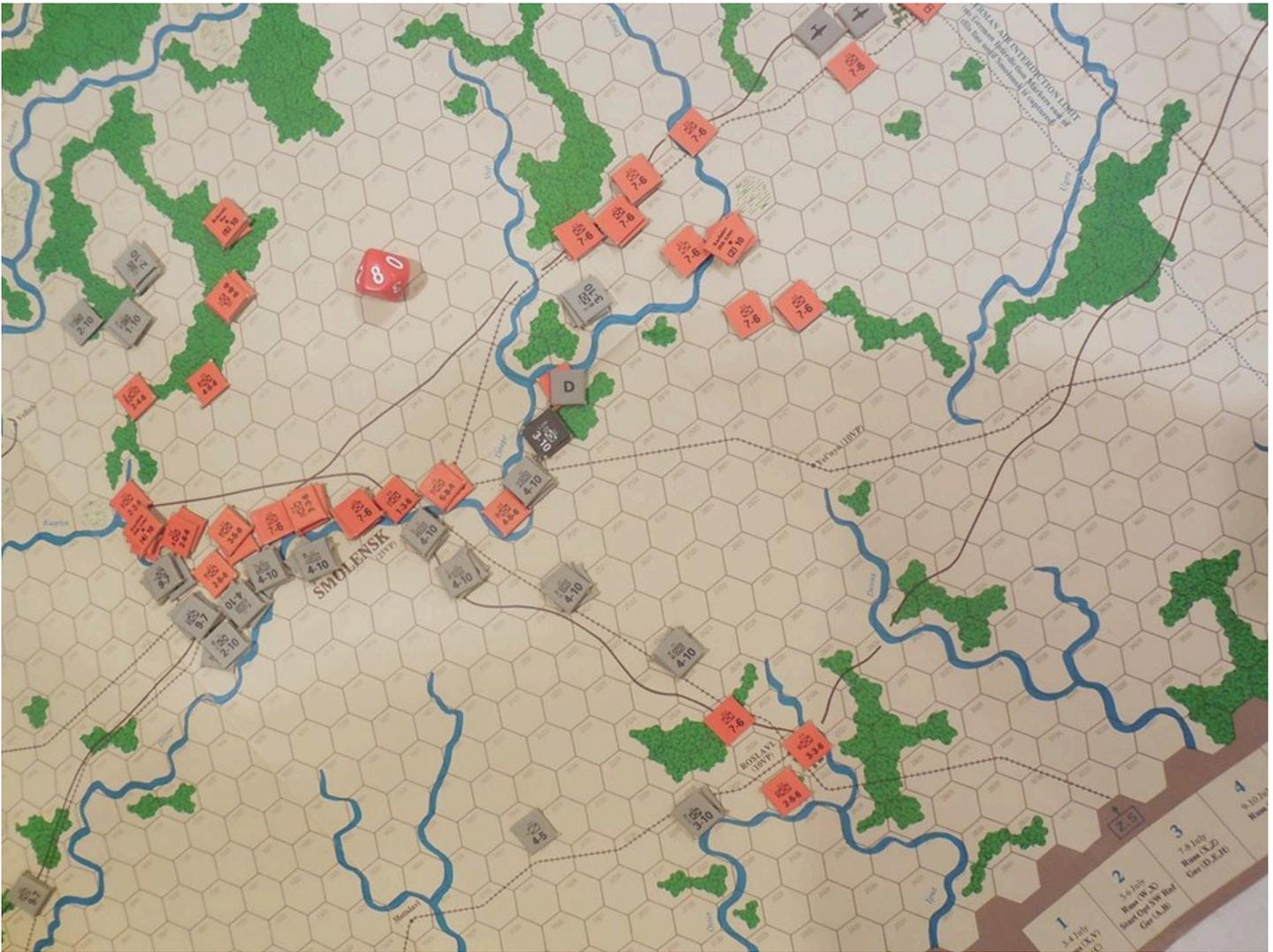


Halfway there, we are being chewed up. Local counterattacks in the north, we will stand fast in the center. We must build some sort of defense on the Dnepr and east of Smolensk or we shall be pocketed. German Panzer Grenadier 73/19 are eliminated on an A1 result, first German unit of any size eliminated. Elsewhere we shore up the lines.

German turn 7

We will continue to push, time is against us. We finally eliminate the pocketed stack of strong Soviet units on the far northern flank. Then disaster, the 6th and 26 Infantry attack across the Kapyla into hex 1613 and discover Soviet iron, rolling a 6 on a 1-2 and are eliminated. I got too cocky. An attack of 86 factors on hex 1715 (General Khomenko and 12 factors) goes in at 7:1 resulting in a D2, the general survives with the 178th Infantry division, hanging on for another precious turn. We continue to bend their line, but our progress is maddeningly slow.

Soviet Turn 8



We send in an aircraft to rescue General Khomenko, after he gives orders to bolster the defence. We need such heroes to continue the struggle. General Rokassovski will take overall command at the front. No attacks this turn, building fall back positions and standing firm. We will make them come to us and pay with blood for every tree, every river crossing every building.

German Turn 8



Some success, Rhoslavl is taken and the Soviet 55th Infantry is displaced at the cost of a step of PanzerGrenadiers, the Soviet 303rd Division repels and attack without loss. Elsewhere along the front Soviet units are destroyed, but not enough, not nearly enough.

Soviet Turn 9



We readjust lines, counterattack into the 17th Panzer Div in Smolensk, causing a step loss and retreating our forces into anew defensive line. We will use our air interdiction each of the next three turns.

German Turn 9



We will demolish what we can. Too many Soviets, too much space and time to reach the objective we need to reach. Time to gobble up some divisions. We reduce the pocket. We make some gains. It will be nowhere near enough.

Soviet Turn 10



Our heroes continue to resist, buying time for the Rodina. An attack on the pocketed 10th Motorized Infantry in hex 3214 causes a two step loss. We build a defensive screen in the south to contain the wandering 3rd Panzer Division.

German Turn 10



Destroying the pocketed forces in Smolensk, but making no forward progress. Stubborn Bolsheviks.

Soviet Turn 11





Time to break out our encircled units, take Smolensk and consolidate our position. We eliminate the brave General Rokassovski and his forces and capture Smolensk, but are nowhere near where we need to be. Our losses have been greater than allocated, also.

Soviet Turn 12



Consolidate, issue Vodka rations, this battle is won.

German Turn 12



No more victory points in reach, will tidy up some isolated Soviets.

Final total: 46 VP (the two hexes of Smolensk the Soviets retook brought the score down from 50 to 46). A very marginal Soviet victory – pretty much a draw.

the whim of the Players. brought onto the map in ed. For example, units sea B may enter in hex 0105, 0106, 0107, 0108, Turn shown is the First ne reinforcements listed ame.

## CONDITIONS

Player according to the at the end of the game, ints they have earned oint Schedule. This will tory Points attained by on the total number of the Germans, the Level may be determined.

Player-Turn. The Soviet Player **may** receive 1 Point for recapturing a city **every time** it is recaptured.

### [15.2] LEVELS OF VICTORY

The Soviet Player subtracts his Victory Point Total from the Point Total of the German Player. The total number of German Points is then compared with the following schedule and the winner, and the Level of Victory, is determined.

#### German Victory Points

(minus Soviet Points)

#### Level of Victory

0 or fewer

Soviet Decisive

1 to 25

Soviet Strategic

26 to 49

Soviet Marginal

50 to 79

German Marginal

80 to 124

German Strategic

125 or more

German Decisive

## [16.0] REINFORCEMENT SCHEDULES

### [16.1] SOVIET REINFORCEMENTS