

STATREP

CITYFIGHT

A Statistical Report of Game Characteristics

by Claude Bloodgood

This Charles Robert award winner (Best Modern Game—1980) certainly merits acclaim. It is an exceptionally well designed game that actually retains all the realism of battle and is quite playable. Gamers at the Virginia State Penitentiary have named it one of their favorite games in an annual poll; *Cityfight* and *Narvik* each received 21 votes (accounting for 42 of a possible 79) in the *VAPEN Favorite Game Poll*. Since players tend to develop a love for their favorite game, it's tough for a new game to win the hearts of players firmly convinced their favorite is the best in the world.

Cityfight did captivate players' imagination and turned former *PanzerBlitz* and *Squad Leader* fanatics into *Cityfight* addicts. A favorite game is something special, but even veteran *Chaco*, *Crimea* and *Narvik* diehards wavered, while *Raid!* specialists rushed into the new *Cityfight*. The final tally was *Cityfight* and *Narvik* (21 each), *Chaco* (10), *Crimea* (6), *Empires of the Middle Ages* (5), *Traveller* (4), *Their Finest Hour* (3), *Coral Sea* (2), and nine other games with one vote each.

The *Cityfight* support was a surprise, for GDW's *Narvik* had won this poll easily in 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, and 1980. The earlier winners were *PanzerBlitz* (1974) and *Chaco* (1975).

Statistical Analysis: Basic Game

Participating Players: 41

51.8% of active players selected the game from an inventory of more than 100 titles available during ten months ending 15 May 1981, and played the basic game training scenario, "Encounter on the Stauffenbergallee."

Repeat Players: 23

90.2% of 41 participants played the "Breakout!" and "Nicosia" scenarios after completing one set of the basic game training scenario.

Total Games Played: 106

"Encounter on the Stauffenbergallee" was played 46 times, "Breakout!" 38 times, and "Nicosia" 22 times.

Average Playing Time: Varied with the scenarios

"Encounter on the Stauffenbergallee" total playing time was 90½ hours for 46 games, an average of 1.97 hours. "Breakout!" total playing time was 105 hours for 38 games, an average of 2.76 hours. "Nicosia" total playing time was 86½ hours for 22 games, an average of 3.93 hours. These averages reflect an understanding of the basic game rules before attempting to play.

Shortest Recorded Game: 0.13 hour

Conceded after 2 turns between one experienced player and one new to *Cityfight* in the "Encounter on the Stauffenbergallee" scenario.

Shortest Complete Game: 0.83 hour

Played between experienced *Cityfight* players in the "Encounter on the Stauffenbergallee" scenario.

Longest Recorded Game: 15.33 hours

Played between relatively inexperienced players (who spent quite a bit of time referring to the rules) in the "Nicosia" scenario.

Best Side Results: Varied with scenario

"Encounter on the Stauffenbergallee" scenario produced a 23-23 result. "Breakout!" scenario produced a Soviet margin of 26-12; American units are spread too thinly to function effectively against concentrated Soviet effort. "Nicosia" scenario produced a Turkish margin of 14-8, but better balance is probable if the Greek player selects good concealment and simply defends when spotted and attacked.

Game Imbalance: Varied with scenario

"Encounter on the Stauffenbergallee" scenario produced a perfect 0.0% imbalance. "Breakout!" scenario imbalance level is 36.8%. "Nicosia" scenario imbalance level is 27.3%. The formula is wins minus losses divided by number of games played. Average play-balance is in the 12-14% range.

Game Balance Analysis

The basic game scenarios "Encounter on the Stauffenbergallee" and "Nicosia" are real tests of skill for both sides. Because of the large number of progressively advanced scenarios which can be created, hard statistics on these are difficult to compile, but a sampling of results taken from the intermediate and advanced games indicates most scenarios are well balanced. The "Take the Money and Run" scenario is definitely not balanced; the police win here, too!

Subjective Analysis by the Players

Play Balance: Varied with scenario

"Encounter on the Stauffenbergallee" rated 8.90 on 41 responses with 40 rating it 9. "Breakout!" rated a predictably poor 4.97 on 36 responses. "Nicosia" rated 7.82 on 22 responses. "Tank Battle at Metalwaren" rated 7.54 on 22 responses. "Take the Money and Run" rated 5.41 on 22 responses. "Beirut" (advanced game training scenario) rated 8.64 on 14 responses. 9 is perfectly balanced, 1 is totally unbalanced.

Playability: 7.98

Average of 41 responses; 9 is supremely playable, 1 is unplayable.

Length of Game: 7.95

Average of 41 responses; 9 is exactly correct length of scenario that may be selected; 1 is impossible to judge length of scenario.

Pace of Play: 8.07*

Average of 41 responses; 9 is smooth and fast pace game. 1 is awkward and slow paced game. *Based on play with gamesmaster controlling play.

Game Challenge: 8.51

Average of 41 responses; 9 is extremely challenging, 1 is no challenge.

Rules Dispute: 8.26*

Average of 41 responses; 9 is none of consequence, 1 is constant disputes. *Based on play with gamesmaster controlling play.

Comments on the Game System

Cityfight is really three games with an infinite number of scenarios possible in each. The basic game is easily learned by reading the rules with the basic game training scenario set up; players can apply the rules to a map situation and obtain a good understanding of the basic system with little effort. The game mechanics increase in complexity as the intermediate and advanced levels are reached, but each level has an excellent training scenario which should be played before attempting the more expansive scenarios at the same level.

Simultaneous movement is represented by a series of alternating actions. A player must choose the action (movement, sighting or fire) desired for one unit, followed by an action from the opposing player, with each alternating on every unit involved. This can be a slow process unless a time limit is enforced, but with a gamesmaster and a time limit, play will flow quite rapidly.

Perhaps the most easily overlooked aspect of the game system is the map. The highly detailed terrain and elevation features are critical to play; study the map until every feature is recognized at a glance. Examine areas that are unusual; a street or bridge above a building in an adjacent hex could be important, and so could many other ingenious lines of fire. Know the area you will fight in as thoroughly as possible; this will bring about much better results.

The game appears extremely complex initially, but learning it a step at a time is not really difficult. Once it is learned, the effort is rewarded with many hours of pleasure (and torment!) playing one of the best games in print. *Cityfight* will not disappoint anyone interested in urban conflicts. ■ ■

Vote for Your Favorite Game

A future StatRep will be devoted to favorite games, with a breakdown of votes for the most popular games of all time. Any game on S&T's Game Rating Chart qualifies, and anyone may vote for one game. Which one is your favorite? To vote, simply write the title and publisher of your favorite game on a postcard and mail it to:

Claude Bloodgood 99432
PO Box 27264
Richmond, VA 23261