

Banzai!!

The Newsletter of the Austin ASL Club

Issue #8

July/August 1996

***This newsletter is FREE. Don't let anyone
charge you for it.***

Tournament Fever Sweeps Austin Area

The fourth annual Austin ASL Team Tournament (June 28-30) was another success, with 15 players comprising 5 teams competing for the honor of putting their names on the Austin ASL Team Trophy. Two-time defending champs *Three Guys Battling the Bulge* (Mike Seningen, Matt Shostak, and Jack O'Quin) were looking for a threepeat, but had to face challenges from the *Violent Counterattack* which everyone was calling *Hailey's Comets* (David Hailey, Tom Lavan, and Todd Hively), the Dallas contingent *GRRRRrrr* (the defending individual champ Russell Mueller, and his teammates Glen Gray and Ralph Garringer), the *Wild Bunch* of Eric Gerstenberg, Mike Austin, and Dave Morgenthaler, and Chas Smith's fearsome team of *Flying Deuces* (Mike Laney and Paul Hornbeck). When the dust had settled, the defending champs were tied with the Deuces for first place, but the visitors owned a 2-1 advantage in head-to-head competition and so took the top spot. The defending champs, however, could boast a bit about Mike Seningen's top finish in the individual category. This tournament was bigger than last year's, and the competition was very tough overall. A testament to the fun factor was the large number of games still in progress on Sunday afternoon, more than in any previous year. See Tourney Recap on page 2 for a more detailed account.

The Banzai Awards

To recognize special performances at the Austin ASL Team Tournament, this newsletter announces the first annual Banzai awards. Chosen completely at the whim of the editor, these awards not only carry with them all the respect that entails, but also have a market value almost equal to the paper they are printed on.

Rookie of the year - Eric Gerstenberg. Owning only the ASLRB and Beyond Valor, and playing ASL with the club since December, Eric not only compiled an impressive 3-2 record, he also completed his first Desert and PTO scenarios, winning the PTO match. With this showing, Eric sent a clear message that he can no longer be considered a rookie. It's time to pick up the other modules, Eric.

Mister Distance - Tom Lavan. A former Austinite, Tom made the trip all the way from Colorado for the chance to tangle with his old dice buddies. When asked what motivated him to come, he replied, getting that poser Shostak to play a desert scenario with light dust was worth the price of admission alone. Insiders speculate, however, that his real motivation

was to seek partners in a time-sharing investment in a surplus Centurion tank.

Young Gun - Chas Smith. Chas has been shaking up the Central Texas ASL community since his arrival in the Spring. Just to prove that his inexorable climb up the ladder was no fluke, he advanced to the championship round in the singles category while pacing his team to the overall championship. This guy is a force.

Comeback Kid - Jack O'Quin. We haven't seen much of Jack since last September, but he announced his return to the ASL scene with a solid 2-1 record at the tournament. It was great to see you again, Jack. Keep it up.

Unsung Hero - David Hailey. For the second year in a row, David has run an outstanding tournament, and he did it largely on his own. From printing flyers to making many telephone calls, to securing the site, to making sure the bills get paid, among other things too numerous to mention, David made the tournament happen for all of us. Thanks, Dave. It can't be easy to do that and try to enjoy your own games, too.

Landser Award - tie - everyone who showed up. The infantry still has to go in and take the ground, and there isn't a tournament unless people show up to support it. Let's keep up the enthusiasm and make it an even better tournament next year.

Club Notes and Ladder Standings

This newsletter continues to generate more interest for our club, which is very gratifying. Since the last issue two new players have called to express their interest in the dub. One, Jeff Toreki, has already started playing games on the ladder, despite his status as a newbie to the game. Major Dave Morgenthaler also has contacted us, and managed to get in three games at the tournament, one also on the ladder. Welcome to the club, guys. That brings our total to three new players since the beginning of this newsletter, and we now have 16 players on the ladder, 12 of them with 3 or more games played. Keep it up guys! The tournament saw 14 ladder matches played, shaking up the standings quite a bit. Mike Seningen's tour de force helped him leap to number 3 with a bullet, while Chas Smith tightened his grip on the #2 slot. Matt Shostak tightened his colon.

Player	Points	Record
Shostak	1251	17-4
Smith	1153	13-6
Seningen	1125	7-7
Hailey	1099	6-2
Esparza	1062	2-0
Purnell	1053	6-3
Tom Woller	1037	1-0
Lavan	1010	2-3
O'Quin	995	2-3
Morgenthaler	978	0-1
Toreki	972	0-1
Swantek	971	1-2
Gerstenberg	938	4-9
Austin	905	0-3
Hively	901	5-12
Kirk Woller	826	3-13
Milam	1000	
Sosa	1000	
Valdez	1000	

Recent Results (since the last newsletter)

Smith	(Germ) def Hively (Brit) in High Danger
Shostak	(Germ) def Seningen (Brit) in Another Balaclava
Seningen	(Germ) def Shostak (Brit) in Another Balaclava
Shostak	(Germ) def Gerstenberg (Russ) in Double or Nothing!
Shostak	(Germ) def Smith (Brit) in Black Friday
Smith	(Amer) def Toreki (Germ) in First and Goal
Seningen	(Germ) def O'Quin (Russ) in Bread Factory #2
Purnell	(Brit) def K Woller (Germ) in Smoke the Kents

K Woller (Germ) def Purnell (Fren) in Chance d'une Affaire
 Shostak (Pol) def Gerstenberg (Germ) in Will to Fight...Eradicated
 Hailey (Germ) def Lavan (Russ) in Schwerepunkt
 O'Quin (Germ) def Hailey (Amer) in Medal of Honor
 Smith (Germ) def Gerstenberg (Brit) in High Danger
 Hively (Germ) def Austin (Pol) in Will to Fight...Eradicated
 Gerstenberg (Germ) def Hively (Fren) in Chance d'une Affaire
 Seningen (Chin) def Lavan (Jap) in Stand and Die
 Smith (Germ) def Morgenthaler (Russ) in Commando Schenke
 O'Quin (Germ) def Austin (Fren) in Le Herisson
 Seningen (Brit) def Hailey (Germ) in This Close to the Sharp End
 Smith (Russ) def Hively (Germ) in No Farther
 Lavan (Brit) def Shostak (Germ) in High Danger
 Lavan (Russ) def Gerstenberg (Germ) in Bread Factory #2
 Hailey (Amer) def Hively (Germ) in The Hand of Fate
 Seningen (Brit) def Smith (Germ) in Cold Crocodiles
 Hailey (Brit) def Austin (Germ) in Rachi Ridge

In other club news, plans are being discussed to have an Austin ASL Club championship tournament in January. The tournament will only be open to club members. Although it's all still very much in the brainstorming stage, the idea at this time is to run a single elimination tournament in January, with seeding based on the ladder. The winner will be the Austin ASL Club champion for 1996, and will earn the right to demand to be called Mister 10-2 at all club events for the next year. Stay tuned for further details.

Ideas Wanted

The club is still looking for ways to help beginners learn the game and become better players. If you have any ideas on this matter, please start talking it up with your fellow club members, and especially contact Matt Shostak and David Hailey. We are interested in hearing from anyone and everyone. Thanks.

New Club Phone List

It's about time we had another phone list for the club members. In order to increase its utility, we would like to include not just the phone number, but also email address (if applicable), a self-rating of experience level (say number of games or years played), and perhaps most importantly an indication of when and how often each player prefers to play. This could help quite a bit when scanning the phone list for a possible opponent at the last minute. Please call Matt Shostak with this information.

Tourney Recap

The Austin Team Tournament adds its own unique twist to ASL tournament play. Not only do players compete for the coveted 10-3 award for best individual performance, but they also comprise 3-member teams which compete for the team title. The team title, unlike the individual award, has some extra requirements, albeit relatively simple ones in concept. To qualify, each team must have at least one game completed in each of several basic categories. The categories have not changed much, if at all, over the years. They are: Eastern Front, Western Front, North Africa, Italian, French, Partisan/Allied Minor/Axis Minor, PTO, and Night/Seaborne/Paradrop. Where a category has several things listed, a scenario involving any one of them covers the whole category. Thus if a player completes a Night scenario, his team is not required to play a Seaborne or a Paradrop scenario. Within that framework, each player can play whatever scenarios he wants, much like the fabled ASLOK tournament.

The fun started right on time, 5:00 pm, Friday June 28, at the Georgetown Recreation Center as the Dallas team of defending singles champ Russell Mueller, Glen Gray, and Ralph Garringer arrived and squared off immediately with their Austin counterparts. Matt Shostak, eager to get the most difficult category out of the way for his team, started up a Night scenario, The Aller Waltz, with Glen Gray. Mike Seningen and Russell Mueller squared off in Strangers In A Strange Land, while Tom Lavan took on Ralph in The Eye of the Tiger.

Glen made quick work of Matt's Brits, as the 9-2 caught a sniper bullet between the eyes at the top of turn 2, putting him behind in a big way early. Mike's French likewise made quick work of Russell's Germans, which kept the records between the two teams even. When Tom Lavan's Russians prevailed over Ralph's Germans, David Hailey's *Comets* were briefly in the team lead with an overall net +1 in their win-loss record. As others showed up during the evening, they paired off mostly according to availability and convenience. Jack O'Quin took on David Hailey in Medal of Honor, and Todd Hively matched dice with Mike Austin in Will to Fight...Eradicated. Hively's Germans were too stout for the Poles, while Medal of Honor went into overtime and would be finished on day 2.

After finishing their first games relatively quickly, Seningen and Shostak switched opponents, Shostak taking on Mueller in Wintergewitter and Seningen playing Gray in Zen With the Wind. Mueller got behind early when he lost a halftrack and the 9-2, MMG, 548 it was carrying to a street fighting attack by a Russian squad. Nevertheless he put up a fight, finally overrunning Russian squads in the wooden buildings. Still, two T-34s survived to the last turn, and they were jumped in Close Combat by the remaining German infantry. The first CC involved an 8-1, 127, 127. When the first attack failed, Matt gamely waxed the uncommitted 127 with a 4:1 attack from his CMG to seal the victory. At the other end of the table, Seningen's Americans proved too much for Glen's Germans, and the defending champs were starting to stake their claim again, putting their overall record at +2. When Jack O'Quin finished the lengthy Medal of Honor game against David Hailey the next morning with a win by his Germans, the team as a whole was starting to look very tough.

The Seningen buzz saw continued to spin on the second day, as Tom Lavan and David Hailey became its next victims. Tom succumbed as the Japanese attackers in the oh-so-sexy scenario Stand and Die. Both players agreed to give the Japanese attackers the balance (upgrading a 10-1 to a 10-2), but apparently it was not enough as Mike's Chinese won. Hailey's Germans got This Close to the Sharp End of that buzzsaw, and Mike had that 4-0 record and an entry into the championship. Meanwhile Chas Smith had very quietly been pulling together an impressive 4-0 record of his own. Not attracting quite as much attention, perhaps because of his relative newness to the area or because he only got one game in on Friday night, Chas vanquished Banzai's rookie of the year Eric Gerstenberg in High Danger, defeated Morgenthaler in Commando Schenke, and jumped into the Stalingrad cauldron with local archrival Todd Hively in No Farther, where his Russians prevailed in a game that went down to the end. A victory over Ralph in One Step Forward completed the 4-0 sweep.

Meanwhile on day 2, Shostak defeated Ralph in Ambush while O'Quin stopped Mike Austin in Le Herisson. Highlights: in Ambush, Matt's Bulgarians finally string together a 36 FP firegroup, and shoot at a pesky partisan squad in woods. The result: a 4MC, followed by a 3 from the fanatic partisan squad to pass. Day 2 also saw the arrival of the rest of the Flying Deuces. During the day Paul Hornbeck found tough opponents in Gray and Mueller, losing to each in Khamsin and Into the Fray, respectively, while teammate Mike Laney stopped Dave Morgenthaler in The T-Patchers and vanquished Austin in Going to Church.

During the weekend Mueller picked up victories over the always dangerous Tom Lavan in Shklov's Labors Lost, and the unflappable David Hailey in Airborne Samurai. The other games on Gray's card included a loss to Gerstenberg in the popular Tiger 222, and a win against Hailey in The Knife Edge of Defeat. Lavan stopped Gerstenberg short in Bread Factory #2. One of the more exciting games of the weekend was Chance d'une Affaire, where Gerstenberg's Germans stole a victory from Hively's French. Hively was in control throughout the game, but it came down to the final CC. Despite winning the ambush, Todd's Frenchmen couldn't get it done and Eric grabbed a squeaker win.

As the field narrowed, by Sunday it was clear that the championship would come down to the defending champs, *Three Guys Battling the Bulge*, and the *Flying Deuces*. Each team had its star primed for a shot at the individual title. Chas Smith of the *Flying Deuces* had gone 4-0 so far for the weekend, as had *Three Guys'* hero, Mike Seningen. The stage was set for a dramatic individual championship match, and they agreed on Cold Crocodiles, a very balanced and exciting scenario favorite. Concurrently the other players on those same two teams were also matched up, and these three games would be the only ones between the two teams for the weekend, due to the arrival times of the various players and the tendency of all players to play the first available

opponent. Jack O'Quin, the *Three Guys*' second leading scorer with a 2-0 record, faced off against Paul Hornbeck in Taking the Left Tit, while *Three Guys*' underachiever Matt Shostak (2-2) took on Mike Laney (2-0) in Victoria Cross.

Victoria Cross, being the smallest scenario, was over first. Both players bid for the British, but the Japanese balance was too strong to give up, so a dice roll was made and Laney got them. Matt's Japanese seemed unbreakable early on, and they piled up a quick total of 12 CVPs, helped along when Mike exposed a truck toting a gun to infantry small arms fire. The dice started to turn, however, and in the late game the Japanese broke like cheap crystal. Adding insult to injury, Matt had placed his HIP unit one hex outside of the allowed area, due to not reading the card in every detail, and when he found out, he took it off as eliminated. From there on it was relatively easy for Mike.

The individual championship, which had been going on since the morning, finished next. Mike's British kept a stiff upper lip despite some early setbacks, mostly having to do with the artillery not coming down and not getting smoke when they wanted it, and managed to scrap their way to a win. The game apparently saw a lot of ebb and flow in the luck department, as one player would seem to get all the good luck one turn, while the other got it the next. It was a well played match, as one would expect from the individual championship.

Seningen's victory kept the suspense level high, as it put the defending champs ahead. The next game would decide it. If Jack won, the *Three Guys* would win the tourney outright. If Paul won, it would go to a tie-breaker, but the *Flying Deuces* would have the edge there by virtue of their 2-1 advantage head-to-head. Paul's Germans handled Jack's Americans for the victory, and secured the next spot on the team trophy for the names of the *Flying Deuces*. In addition, each of the winning team members took home a very nice trophy, about 8 inches tall, of a paratrooper. Mike Seningen got the 10-3 award, also a trophy depicting a paratrooper.

With its fourth annual local tournament another success, Austin has firmly established itself on the ASL map in Texas. We know of no other tournament in the state with such a consistent success rate. Veteran players noted that the talent level at the tournament was the strongest ever. Only a small number of the players present could be considered rookies, and some of them turned a few heads with upset victories. It was a very strong field, and no game was easy. After his grueling victory, Mike Seningen remarked that this was the hardest time he had ever had in its four years with regard to the level of the competition. Notable also was the spirit in which the games were played, as all the players, from championship contenders to rookies trying to learn this difficult but rewarding game, had a great deal of fun. Camaraderie was evident as players took a great interest in the other games going on around them, perhaps helped somewhat by the team aspect, which allows for a player that is out of the running by himself to still be in contention for the team honors.

The Box Scores

20 Taking the Left Tit German
Paul Hornbeck defeats Jack O'Quin

28 Ambush! Bulgarian
Matt Shostak defeats Ralph Garringer

36 Rachi Ridge British
David Hailey defeats Mike Austin

37 Khamsin British
Glen Gray defeats Paul Hornbeck

43 Into the Fray German
Russell Mueller defeats Paul Hornbeck

75 Strangers In a Strange Land French
Mike Seningen defeats Russell Mueller

77 Le Herrisson German
Jack O'Quin defeats Mike Austin

RB3 Bread Factory #2 Russian
Tom Lavan defeats Eric Gerstenberg

U Chance D'Une Affaire German
Eric Gerstenberg defeats Todd Hively

G25 T-Patchers German
Mike Laney defeats David Morgenthaler

74 Shoklov's Labors Lost (24.2) Russian
Russell Mueller defeats Tom Lavan

A25 Cold Crocodiles British
Mike Seningen defeats Chas Smith

A32 Zon with the Wind American
Mike Seningen defeats Glen Gray

A58 Munda Mash (ATL1 redone) Japanese
Ralph Garringer defeats David Morgenthaler

A70 Wintergewitter (atp2 repub.) Russian
Matt Shostak defeats Russell Mueller

A75 Medal of Honor German
Jack O'Quin defeats David Hailey

A80 Commando Schenke (SCA3 repub.) German
Chas Smith defeats David Morgenthaler

A85 Airborne Samurai Dutch
Russell Mueller defeats David Hailey

ASLUG6 One Step Forward (Issue #3) French
Chas Smith defeats Ralph Garringer

ASLUG12 One-Log Bridge (#6) American
Eric Gerstenberg defeats Ralph Garringer

BB5 Going to Church Canadian
Mike Laney defeats Mike Austin

CH20 The Hand of Fate American
David Hailey defeats Todd Hively

CH49 High Danger British
Tom Lavan defeats Matt Shostak

CH49 High Danger German
Chas Smith defeats Eric Gerstenberg

Z3 No Farther Russian
Chas Smith defeats Todd Hively

Z16 The Knife Edge of Defeat Japanese
Glen Gray defeats David Hailey

TOT7 Tiger 222 German
Eric Gerstenberg defeats Glen Gray

TOT18 The Aller Waltz German
Glen Gray defeats Matt Shostak

TOT23 This Close to the Sharp End British
Mike Seningen defeats David Hailey

WCW1 Will to Fight Eradicated German
Todd Hively defeats Mike Austin

WCW2 Eye of the Tiger Russian
Tom Lavan defeats Ralph Garringer

WCW10 Stand and Die Chinese
Mike Seningen defeats Tom Lavan

Rout8 Victoria Cross British
Mike Laney defeats Matt Shostak

Standings (Individual)

- 1 Mike Seningen (5-0)
- 2 Mike Laney (3-0)
- 3 Chas Smith (4-1)
- 4 Jack O'Quin (2-1)
- 5 Russell Mueller (3-2)
- 6 Tom Lavan (3-2)
- 7 Eric Gerstenberg (3-2)
- 8 Glen Gray (3-3)
- 9 Matt Shostak (2-3)
- 10 David Hailey (2-4)
- 11 Paul Hornbeck (1-2)
- 12 Todd Hively (1-3)
- 13 Ralph Garringer (1-4)
- 14 David Morgenthaler (0-3)
- 15 Mike Austin (0-4)

Standings (Team)

Flying Deuces 8-3
Three Guys Battling the Bulge 9-4
GRRRRrrr 7-9
Violent Counterattack 6-9
Wild Bunch 3-9

Personal Leader Counters Overrated!

Anecdotal evidence from the tournament suggests that having your own personal leader counter in a scenario may not be as cool as it would first appear. Tournament attendees got yuks aplenty when the 8-0 Hailey counter double boxcarred his way into oblivion on self rally attempts in Medal of Honor. Russell Mueller's 9-1 German NCO started off well in Strangers in a Strange Land by ambushing some French soldiers in CC. He spent most of the rest of the scenario under DM, however, and wound up captured. So for all of you personal leader counter wannabees out there, be careful what you wish for.

A Conversation With Louie Tokarz

(Club building being a large concern of this newsletter, Banzai continues to interview other ASL players who are heavily involved in building and maintaining quality clubs in their areas, with the hope that we can learn from them. The first such interview, with Portland ASL Ubercarebear Dade Canaga, appeared in issue number 3. This interview with Louie took place via email last winter. Publishing constraints have kept it in the hopper until now, when the timing seems light Louie is the head honcho of the Windy City Wargamers.)

Banzai: Louie, can you first give us a brief rundown of your ASL resume?

LT: Resume: age 33, roofer and artist. Been playing ASL for 8 years and wargaming for 16. President of the Windy City Wargamers for the past 8 years. Won a couple of local Vitp tournaments and ASL tournaments.

Finished 2nd at the 91 ASLOK, 2nd at last years Wild West Fest, 1st at last years GenCon ASL tournament, and 1st at last years ASLOK.

How often does the club meet?

Three times a month. We used to meet 4 times but one of our guys just moved to LA and we can't use his facilities anymore.

Where do you meet? Have you had any luck getting a meeting place besides someone's house?

Up north we meet in a game store which has a gameroom in the back. Our central meeting is in a bookstore which has an area in back for about 12 guys. Our south meeting is in an old school which the city of Sauk Village uses for social functions.

How many tournaments does your club run, and when are they?

We have been running an ASL tournament here in April for the past 5 years. Two years ago we decided to take the plunge and go National. This year will be the first year we take over the ASL OPEN. We've been working hard to make this tournament different from some of the others. For example this year we have produced 8 new scenarios for the tournament. All have been playtested to death. The Cool thing is that they will all be in Full Color; Corner art, counters, the works. They look pretty tough. Anyone who preregisters or sends us \$10 can get all 8 plus the 2 we did last year. All money will go toward running the tournament.

We also have been running a VITP tournament. Although we haven't had as much success with this, this year we're going national. The dates are March 2nd and 3rd.

Does your club have a newsletter? A ladder?

Yep! And Yep! We have been putting out a newsletter once a month for over 8 years. Last year we started a cool Ladder for ASL using a system of deadlines for games and challenges that make it more like King of the Hill. The guys from the Eastern Penn. Gaming Soc. Have asked us how we run our ladder so they can start one themselves.

How many of your members travel to tournaments?

For the last few years we have had at least 13 members make the trip to Avaloncon to play in the ASL tournament and quite a few others play in the other tournaments. ASLOK has always been our biggest trip of the year. Usually we put 15-20 guys in that tournament.

How do you go about recruiting new members? How successful has that been?

Word of mouth and the AH General. So far so good. We average about 80 to 90 members annually.

Do you have any advice for people trying to start a new club?

Be consistent. If you are going to do a newsletter then make sure it comes out on time all the time. Keep people informed and involve dedicated people to do the grunt work. After a while those people will be obvious.

What has been the biggest factor in the success of the Chicago club?

We are fortunate to have a couple of guys who DO the grunt work. What I mean is we get on the phone and organize things for everyone whether it be a trip or an outing. A few of the guys have weekly meetings at their house to play campaign games or Multi-player games. And We ARE Consistent with everything. When we say we're going to run something we do.

I have heard several new players express frustration at trying to learn this game. What do you think is the best approach? What advice would you give new players? What advice would you give grognards with respect to teaching new players? You must have been a new player once. How did you become one of the heavyweights?

Great Question! First let me explain one of my theories on learning ASL. Anyone who goes into a game in his first year shouldn't go into it with a deadly competitive edge. Learn the game first. Write down anything that comes into your head when you are playing. Play as many games against good players as possible and learn, learn, learn. If you don't win a single game in a year, SO WHAT! Your time will come. I've seen too many of my fellow club members start playing ASL and get all frustrated because they weren't winning any games. Hell, just who do they think they are. No one is that good. One player in particular used to throw dice around the room because he never could beat me. And he shouldn't have. He just never took the time to learn the game. I was lucky to meet Jeff Cebula when I wanted to start playing ASL. At the time I had owned ASL for about 2 years and had read the rulebook 3 times. Jeff was real cool about teaching me the game. And for at least 2 years I won maybe 2 games, and we used to play at least once a week. Jeff is a great player and had been playing SL/ASL since the very beginning. I still have the notes I used to take when we played. One still cracks me up; it says that "units are ALWAYS DM when they first Break", something everyone takes for granted now.

Here in Chicago we run seminars from time to time for beginners. I have always been open with beginners. I'll play anyone anytime. However nowadays some of the new guys are afraid to play some of us good players and I think that it's a shame. They just don't get it. Learn first!

Have you written any articles for any of the ASL publications?

No, just our newsletter. Recently we compiled all the ASL Stuff from our club newsletter since the beginning and released it to the ASL Masses. It is called ASL Stuff quite appropriately. It is 105 pages for only \$3 plus \$3 postage. If you guys would like to buy a few at a time the postage is less per issue.

If so, what advice would you give to an ASL player who is thinking of writing such an article for one of the established publications?

I'm not real sure I'm in a position to give advice on writing. However, I know what I like to read. Just be yourself and stick to what you know.

Given that most authors would prefer to see their work published in an establish 'zine or annual, what niche do you see club newsletters such as this one filling? Do you think there is a place for substantive articles in such a forum?

Absolutely! Not everyone can have his articles published in a major zine. And with us minor pubs the work is immediate, right now, not 6 months or 1 year down the line. We are the forum for beginners to cut their teeth on.

In your opinion, what are the big issues facing the ASL community today?

Survival. How long is AH going to be around. Will The MMP thing work. I know that I for one will not playtest for AH anymore if Gary Fortenberry is still making money on our work. And we used to do a lot of playtesting for Mac' and Rex. Time will tell.

Totsugeki Talk

Matt Shostak and Dade Cariaga

[Matt] Totsugeki has been played quite a bit, and talked about quite a bit as well. It seems to be well balanced and a tournament favorite, so perhaps it warrants some discussion. Recently I had the opportunity to

analyze this scenario, and I was fortunate enough to get Dade Cariaga to add his comments as well.

[Dade] An interesting(?) note: Grognard Louie Tokarz mentioned at the WWF, that, although the scenario is still balanced, the ratio of Japanese wins has increased over the last year or so. Could it be that ASL players are finally starting to master the new line of thinking required by the Sons of Nippon?

[Matt] Chinese Advantages/Disadvantages: I think the Chinese advantages are numerical superiority, time, and the guns themselves. The dare death squads aren't really an advantage over the Japanese, but they are a valuable tool that the Chinese player should use carefully. I would also list HIP as an advantage, although in this scenario it's probably not a huge one. I might also list the terrain as an advantage, if only because with light jungle in effect there is the possibility of actually harming the Japanese once in a while with defensive fire.

[Dade] As Brian Youse pointed out, the Chinese DD squads are good mostly because of their -1 DRM to CC attacks. Their berserk ability is less useful. I did use it in a game once and it paid off big: my DD squad took out a full-strength 448 and one of the Japanese leaders!

[Matt] The Chinese disadvantages are in troop quality. These guys have crummy firepower, support weapons, and ELR. Their leadership isn't that great either. Moreover, the Japanese have a few 8-morale types.

[Dade] The firepower is really bad. Unless you're using PBF against an unconcealed target, chances are pretty small that you're going to do anything when you fire. You've got to avoid stacking, as the Chinese player you need to cover a lot of terrain, and the possibility of a lucky advancing fire shot, or (shudder) not-so-lucky CC attack taking out all the units in a stack is enough incentive to keep you spread out.

[Matt] Chinese Doctrine: When trying to come up with the "doctrine" for my forces in a scenario, I like to look at their strengths and weaknesses and then look at the victory conditions. In this scenario that's relatively simple. The Japanese have to take all three guns, and the guns can't move, so you know where they're headed ultimately. The Japanese also don't have oodles of time, so they must come right at the Chinese hard (not that the Japs mind). How can the Chinese stop them with those crummy troops? Well, getting into a prolonged firefight is, in my opinion, the wrong way to do it. Once the Chinese squads start breaking and failing ELR, their force will go to pieces and the Japanese will have a field day. This is not to say that the Chinese shouldn't fire on the Japanese. With only light jungle in effect and a lot of FFNAM likely, many defensive fire shots will be worthwhile. But prep fire will very often be a bad idea, except when the fight reaches the guns, the last stand area. Intensive firing the guns is a very *bad idea*, but otherwise they shouldn't be afraid to fire. The guns can really pack a wallop sometimes. A key Chinese advantage is their numerical superiority. They can afford to trade squad for squad, and I would encourage them to do so. Therefore, they should welcome CC opportunities with the Japanese. This brings up the dare death squads. I think a very good use for them is to set them up where they might have a chance to advance onto a stack of unconcealed, preferably CX, Japanese and take them out in HTH CC. I really think that the combined advantages of numerical superiority and time will give the Chinese plenty of opportunities to tempt the Japanese into CC.

[Dade] I agree about the CC, but only to a point. NEVER let the Japanese advance into your location concealed, unless you're concealed as well. That's just throwing squads away. H2H is wonderful for the Chinese, but only if they can avoid getting ambushed!

[Matt] So, in summary, I would say fire at good targets in defensive fire, but do not prep fire. Skulk instead. Do not break and rout away from potential Japanese advance into CC unless it is obvious that you will lose.

[Dade] I agree 100% about the skulking. As far as breaking to rout away, the Chinese propensity to rally is low. But if you need to avoid getting ambushed in CC, go ahead and rout. Even a broken Chinese squad will hinder movement; a dead Chinese squad won't help at all.

[Matt] Chinese Setup: I think the most dangerous Japanese assault is one coming right up the middle, since they can then hit any gun they want without changing their axis of advance very much. Therefore I recommend placing most of the troops in the middle area, with just a couple squads watching each flank, perhaps armed with LMGs in likely firelane spots. It is good that the setup keeps the Chinese a certain distance from the board edge. I would recommend it anyway. Try to set up units far enough away from the board edge so that the Japanese would need to go CX to get close enough to advance into CC. This greatly limits ambush risks. Absolutely put a unit on the path in the central bamboo to prevent the Japanese from running full speed through there. I like the idea shown to me by Dade of putting the MMGs with leaders right behind a squad, but with LOS to likely approach routes to that squad. They will be harder to engage in close combat that way, and they can help protect the front line guys with fire. I think the bamboo hexes are almost too obvious for the HIP (dare death) squads, so I would recommend finding a less obvious spot for them. Practically all the terrain on the board is concealment terrain, so try something unusual. It is important, however, to try to position them somewhere that you anticipate that they can advance onto a Japanese stack and kill them in HTH CC. Remember that they need a leader to go berserk

[Dade] You're right about the bamboo being a little obvious for an HIP location. Oh, the dismay I felt when Matt fired blindly into the bamboo hex to reveal my not-so-cleverly hidden DD squad? Also, remember that the Chinese are not stealthy, and, hence, cannot retain HIP status when a Japanese unit attempts to enter their location.

[Matt] I think it is very worthwhile to consider one of the guns as a likely "last stand" position, and put your foxholes around it. They don't need to be occupied at start; your troops can fall back to them. Even if the Japanese go for this gun first, it shouldn't hurt your chances that much. You'll just have to make sure they take the maximum damage getting it.

[Dade] Some people advocate firing the guns into adjacent hexes to gain acquisition before the Japanese get there. I'm not sure about this either way. The B11 makes me hesitant, but a -2 acq counter on an adjacent hex will make your opponent really pause to consider if he wants to move in.

[Matt] Japanese Advantages/Disadvantages: The Japanese have much better troops than the Chinese in this scenario, but fewer of them. With the usual tendency for the Japanese to wither away, one must be very wary of the numerical advantage the Chinese have. Although their machine guns are not much better than those of the Chinese, they also have DCs and a light mortar. I think troop quality is the only real advantage the Japanese have in this scenario, but it's very significant. Their disadvantages have already been noted as Chinese advantages: time, and facing a numerically superior foe.

[Dade] The DC of course is especially helpful. At Enfilade '95, I watched Rob Wolkey declare a Banzai charge against Jeff DeBaal's last Chinese gun, then, mid-Banzai, create a DC hero which entered the gun location ahead of the Banzai wave. The DC went off, shattered the in-hex defenders, and the rest of the banzaiers entered the hex with no more opposition than some residual firepower and a bunch of broken Chinese. Devastating?

[Matt] Japanese Doctrine: This scenario may feel a bit funny to some players, because they expect the Japanese to rush into CC at every opportunity and to banzai whenever possible. I think just the opposite is true in this particular situation. Breaking a Chinese squad which also fails its ELR is almost as good as killing it in this scenario. And it poses much less risk of loss for the Japanese. As usual, concealment is very important in the PTO, so I would recommend striving to maintain it, but not at the expense of moving forward. The key is to pin the Chinese down in a firefight, break several of them, rush through the gaps and wreak havoc.

[Dade] I agree. Avoid CC unless you've got a good chance at ambush.

[Matt] Japanese Attack: I like the Japanese push straight up the middle, because then any of the three guns is a legitimate option to be targeted for destruction first. This allows the Japanese to keep the initiative throughout the game. Still, a sweeping attack around one of the flanks can be very intimidating, especially if the Chinese player isn't very

prepared for it. I would deploy the maximum allowable number of squads and use the half squads to probe. Most likely the worst thing that will happen to them in defensive fire is that they will break. Then they can simply rout back to a Japanese leader and should be back in the game before their next chance to move, given the commissar-like powers of the Japanese leaders. But be prepared to lose some of those half squads to double breaking. They should be able to strip some of the Chinese concealment.

[Dade] In our game, I was surprised that Matt came "up the middle." I was expecting a flanking tactic and had my MGs set up for it. In retrospect, a good Chinese defense against the up-the-gut Japanese attack, would be to give ground until you reach the path that bisects the board. When the Japanese hit the path, engage with everything you've got, then fall back. You've got to make a stand before he gets to the jungle on the near side of the path.

[Matt] Since that playing Mike Seningen beat me with what I thought was a really well executed attack as the Japanese. It was sort of a left wheel". He had a very small flanking force on his extreme right, a slightly stronger but not overwhelming force in the middle, and a strong left hook. He paced his attack well, not blindly charging forward but always keeping a steady pressure on in most areas. Even his small flanking force on his right was effective. Having seen this style of attack, I have to say I think it is a good one. It avoids getting bottled up in the middle, and allows the Japanese to continually probe toward the weakest areas, always taking the path of least resistance in order to infiltrate and cause havoc. I don't think there's much more to say about the attack, since choices will depend on the situation. The usual Japanese tricks should be employed, especially trying to get around isolated defenders and eliminating them for failure to rout. Although I don't recommend plunging into CC or banzai carelessly, I also do not advocate shunning them altogether. They are still very powerful weapons in the Japanese arsenal. But use them with caution, and don't risk large stacks in CC. One thing should be said about eliminating the guns. If at all possible, they should be swarmed from multiple directions, with the main attack (preferably a 448 armed with a DC) coming at them from outside their covered arc. If you come at the guns piecemeal, they can have a field day with that 2 ROF. Even a mighty Japanese 448 might not look so hot after a couple of 12 +0s are inflicted on it.

[Dade] I think I'd advocate a DC hero over a 448. Heroes are expendable (didn't somebody famous say that?) Let the hero lead the charge and follow him up with your squads. The Chinese player HAS to fire at the hero. Regardless of whether the hero survives, he will hopefully draw the bulk of the DF. Believe me, there's nothing more discouraging for the Chinese player, than to blast at the first Japanese unit that comes into LOS, and then be forced to make that agonizing FPF decision, when MORE units follow up!

[Matt] Conclusion: In conclusion I'd like to say that Dade's points are well taken. I had not thought of some of those ideas, such as the DC hero. Overall, I like the Japanese in this scenario. I think players may be learning how to win with them now, and may be getting the edge on the Chinese. But that edge is probably not very big. Still, it's a lot of fun to play and you're likely to see it at tournaments for some time to come. Check it out.

Coming Soon...

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