

Observer Report: Skirmish Action AAR by Russ Lockwood

I dropped by On Military Matters on Thursday and watched a Skirmish Action game in progress: Lee and Mark as Germans defending against a US-UK drive by Dennis and John. I arrived halfway through turn two.

As it turned out, the first game lasted exactly one card draw. Apparently, the Luftwaffe still had enough wherewithal to send one FW-190 with 30mm underwing pods against the Allies. The quad-50s on the AA halftracks failed and the FW-190 bombed and strafed the Allied force, destroying two tanks and a halftrack plus lots of Allied infantry.

They restarted.



Second Game

On the left, a UK tank had reached and crossed the river, taking out a Tiger tank in the process by the time I arrived. The US on the right flank was keeping most of his infantry in a woods preparing to cross with three Shermans and a halftrack. The Germans were generally holding the buildings on their side of the river.

Skirmish Action uses card-based initiative -- a main deck holds one card per vehicle or squad. As a card is turned over, that particular vehicle or squad activates. Each gets "up to" two actions (move, fire, dig-in, overwatch, etc). The first action is automatic, the second (except for move) requires a CQ (Crew Quality) test - - pass and the vehicle or squad can do a second action. Fail and that's that. Note that a vehicle or squad can only fire once in a turn from actions. If it's on Overwatch, it can fire a second time during a turn.

As for command, you can swap out a commander's card for one of his vehicle's or squad's card. The vehicle or squad can't be activated twice, but that provides a player with flexibility during the turn.



Back to the Game

Dennis charged across the bridge with his halftrack carrying six Brits and stormed a German HMG in the hedgerow. The HMG, on Overwatch, fired first. Alas for the HMG, it's die rolls were awful and only managed to suppress the halftrack (and its crew). The boys in the back were also attacked and dodged every bullet. They jumped out and close assaulted the HMG, almost getting all of it. A 95mm HE round from a Cromwell took out the HMG -- and friendly fire blew up the halftrack, too.

German panzergrenadiers blew a panzerfaust attack and John scooted two Shermans off the side road for some points. A squad of US infantrymen ran across the bridge and stormed a building. A counterattack by Volksgrenadiers was thrown back. The rest of the infantry ran out of the woods and huddled in parade ground lines at the end of the bridge.

Perfect. The FW-190 from the first game showed up again, the AA halftrack failed again, and the plane dropped a bomb right smack in the middle of the pack of GIs. Only four GIs survived out of 20. The nearby Sherman tank was damaged.

Rule number one: Don't clump your troops.

Those German panzergrenadiers close assaulted the lead Cromwell with the German equivalent of sticky bombs. As bad as their roll was for the panzerfaust against the Sherman, his roll against the Cromwell succeeded beyond all recognition. Scratch one Allied tank.

More shots were exchanged, but the weight of the Allied forces eventually crushed the Germans. The Allies were able to move off the table at the far end of the table.



Game Thoughts

The plane becomes a huge crapshoot in a tournament because it costs lots of points. When it hits, it can do great damage, but when it misses, it's a lot of lost points.

With only four turns, the attackers need to move. None of this wait and see, plodding-along attack. You've got to get stuck in quick and start attacking.

The die rolling moves along once you figure out when you intersperse CQ tests. The defender's "6" -- which is basically means the defender gets away scot-free -- is a great equalizer. The attacker's "6" -- which usually allows a second die roll to add to the damage -- means defenders get whacked more than the combat results table would indicate.

The second, competitive, game started at 11:30am and ended with turn three at 2:30pm -- figure an hour per turn with 13 units (squads and vehicles) per side, or about a half dozen per player.

For the hour or so I watched, it offered considerable command challenges about what to do with the (random) squad and vehicle activation. The game looked good, played well with two newbies, and came to a conclusion in three turns -- not much left of the Germans to do much in the fourth turn.