

DESIGN NOTES FOR BANZAI BLITZ

By
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Banzai Blitz was originally a variant article for the game Panzerblitz that brought it into the Pacific theater of war. It was published in the magazine "The Spartan Journal #10" back in 1976, although it was originally written in the early Seventies. The author was Norman Beveridge, one of the early leaders in Panzerblitz variant development of the times. The article introduced variant rules to cover certain aspects of ground combat in the Pacific. It also had two counter sheets, eight mapsheets, and eight scenarios. It was one of the better Panzerblitz variant articles of its time, although it has been far surpassed by the more modern tactical game systems of today. Still I thought that the scenarios were worth converting to the Rising Sun computer game of the John Tiller's Campaign Series.

The Mapsheets

As I earlier said there were eight mapsheets. Seven of those were one half the size of a Panzerblitz mapboard. The eighth one was really two quarter size mapboards used to serve as a connection to the standard Panzerblitz mapboards which were used in two of the scenarios. The terrain on the mapboards introduced new features such as jungles and beaches, something that the tactical games of the time did not have. The streams on the maps come in two flavors, either basic streams or minor rivers. The few roads on the maps are unpaved. The jungles are either light jungle around the edges or heavy jungle in the center. One thing about the open ground, it all basic open ground, no fields or rice patties or kunai grass, but then that's what you would expect on a Panzerblitz board. The number of boards per scenario varies in number, ranging from two to four, although two of them use four mapsheets plus a standard Panzerblitz board and the two connecting quarter strips.

The Counters

The counters come in two sheets, one US counters and one Japanese counters. The vast majority of units are either infantry or artillery. The US counter sheet is heavy on Marine units and rather light on Army but then in all the scenarios the Marines are the main force on the US side anyway. There are few vehicles on either sheet so the scenarios are basically infantry fights with occasional armored support. Sorry guys but there won't be any massive tank battles in this set of scenarios. In fact there were few tank battles in the Pacific and most of them were individual tank on tank fights anyway. If that is not bad enough, Beveridge never provided a unit composition chart so I had to use Panzerblitz and Panzer Leader composition charts to figure out what each unit is suppose to represent. This has resulted in many scenarios having an over abundance of artillery and mortars compared to what was really historically present, but then I am giving each side what Beveridge gave them. Also note that in some of the scenario either or both sides have naval ground units in them. Their leaders have their naval ranks, not their equivalent Army ranks listed.

The Scenarios

Scenario #1: This is the battle of Manikau on Guadalcanal. It is a good representation of the real battle, except the map board lacks a north-south river to represent the Manikau. It is a ten turn scenario. The Japanese did not have quite as many troops in real life as the scenario would suggest but they did never-the-less put up an effective defense. The Marines are attacking with three battalions, one on the board, and two which enter on Turn 1. One of these battalions is conducting an amphibious assault from the sea. They also have airstrikes and off the board artillery support in this scenario. Historically the assault was a failure, with the Marines suffering moderate casualties, especially with the battalion doing the amphibious assault. I would expect the Marines to do no better in the scenario.

Scenario #2: This is the Japanese assault on the Lunga Air Field on Guadalcanal (Lunga Field is about a mile southeast of Henderson Field.). This is another ten turn scenario. Again it is a good representation of the battle. However the Japanese have way too much artillery. Historically the Japanese only had some light and medium mortars supporting the attack, the rest of the artillery was still west of the Manikau River. (The Japanese quickly realized that you could not move artillery through the jungle so they left it behind.) Historically the Japanese did break through the Marine line in a few places and as a result a few platoons did make it to the airfield, only to be promptly eliminated by reinforcing US Army units. In this scenario the Japanese will easily break through but will suffer heavy casualties and the issue will probably be in doubt until the end of the game.

Scenario #3: This is the Japanese assault on Wake Island. This is still another ten turn scenario. It is a fair representation of the actual event. The Marines start the game set up on the board. I had to make a few changes in the American forces. I changed the 155mm howitzers unit to a 5 inch gun battery unit and the 75mm infantry gun unit to a 3 inch anti-aircraft gun unit, to reflect what the Marines really had in the actual battle. The Japanese are making an amphibious assault in their landing craft on Turn 1. However they do have airstrikes and off-the-board artillery support in this scenario. Historically the Japanese were able to land in fog, thus avoiding the shore battery fire and subsequently took the island. However in this scenario the guns on shore will cause heavy losses to the Japanese while they are still in their landing craft and the Marines will probably win this one.

Scenario #4: This the combined Marine/Army assault on Wickham Anchorage in the New Georgia campaign. It is twenty turns long. The Japanese start the game set up on the board and the Americans enter on the west side of the board on Turn 1. It is a fair representation of the battle. Nothing outstanding about this scenario as it usually goes the distance in terms of scenario length and the outcome is in doubt until the end. Historically the Americans took the anchorage but it took a few days to do it.

Scenario #5: This is the Japanese counter-landing on the American beachhead on Bougainville Island. It is a short ten turn scenario. The game starts with neither side on the board. The Japanese make an unopposed amphibious landing in their landing craft on Turn 1. The Marines then enter the board from the east side on Turn 1. I had to make a change to the Japanese order of battle to correct a mistake. The original author had the Japanese bringing in four 3 inch anti-aircraft gun units when he meant four machine gun platoons (the counters look very much alike on the original counter sheet). So I changed them to four machine gun platoons. Historically the Japanese assault was a failure as the Marines responded promptly to it and destroyed the Japanese force in a day and a half.

Scenario #6: This is the American landing on the island of Saipan. It is one of the big scenarios and is thirty turns long. The mapboard includes one of the original Panzerblitz boards. The Marines make an amphibious assault in their landing craft, supported by amphibious LVT(A)-4 assault tanks and massive off-the-board artillery support. The Marines come ashore in waves spread out over several separate turns. The Japanese start the game set up on the board and must repel the invasion or at least limit the gains that the Americans will make in the course of the game. Historically the battle was a draw, the Americans did establish a solid beachhead but could not capture all of their assigned objectives on the first day and the Japanese did fail to drive the Marines back into the sea..

Scenario #7: This is the American landing on the island of Tinian. It is not quite as big as the previous scenario, but it is still 30 turns long. The Japanese start the game set up on the board. Again the Marines are making an amphibious assault in their landing craft, supported by their landing craft tanks on Turn 1. And as in the previous scenario, the Marine assault will be coming in waves over several separate turns. However the off-the-board artillery support the Marines have comes from long range guns located on the nearby island of Saipan. While the Marine force is the right size compared to its historical counterpart, the Japanese force seems to include most of the entire force defending the whole island which is unhistorical. (Historically the Marines invaded from an unexpected direction which caught the Japanese by surprise and allowed them to get on shore with a minimum of casualties.) The mapboard includes an airfield again which represents one of the island's two northern airfields that the Marines were supposed to capture on the first day (the Marines captured both by the end of the third day.) The historical result was a Japanese victory in that they prevented the American capture of the airfield on the first day, but in the game it can go either way.

Scenario #8: This is the Japanese counterattack on Guam Island. It is the biggest scenario of the set and it is 30 turns long. The mapboards includes another one of the original Panzerblitz mapboards. Both sides start the game set up on the board. The Japanese are the aggressors in this scenario and must recapture a lot of lost ground from the Marines. The scenario is rather ahistorical in that it is supposed to represent the final Japanese counterattack on the fifth day of the battle, but by the size of both forces is really a caricature of the entire five days of the Japanese counterattack in one battle. I had to make some changes to the American order of battle. The original author had over half of the American artillery set up as infantry gun type units. While the Marines did

historically have some field guns mounted on halftracks to act as infantry guns, their artillery almost always acted as artillery, providing indirect fire support. Thus I made all of the artillery units as regular artillery. Also the Americans have a very large number of engineer units in this scenario. However I realized that some of these were Naval Construction units (Seabees) so I made those engineers into construction engineers. The historical result of the battle was an American victory and in the scenario that is usually how it goes as the Americans have a bigger force than the Japanese.

Conclusion

I hope that players find enjoyment in these conversions of these old scenarios from a time long past.