

DESIGN NOTES FOR THE SCENARIOS IN “ODE TO PANZER LEADER”

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In this article I will explain the design notes to the scenarios in “Ode to Panzer Leader”. These are the first ten scenarios that came with the original game. The design notes will describe the scenario set ups and possible variations to them. Other variations such as a change in the environmental conditions, scenario length, morale levels, etc, I leave to the judgment of the individual players.

Scenario #1

This scenario depicts the attack of American airborne forces against various objectives held by German troops behind Utah Beach. This scenario uses the beachfront board so all the hexes in the interior away from the beach are two levels higher than what they would normally be. In the original scenario, regular rifle platoons were used by the Allied side to represent the airborne infantry despite that fact that paratroops exist. So I identified them as being from the glider infantry regiment. However in West Front paratroop units are used to represent glider and paratroop units so I stayed with that. By the original scenario, the Germans are set up in-between hex lines xx,10 and xx,20, which corresponds to the old Board D. However, given their small force, they are set up on or adjacent to the American objective hexes, with one additional force set up in Einkel. The Americans are set up anywhere on the board at least four hexes away from the nearest German unit. There are no reinforcements for either side.

In the original scenario, the victory conditions were dependent on the Americans capturing one of three objectives, both town hexes in Merden, the center town hex in Nece, or the bridge outside of Artain. I merely made these into objective hexes, with each location being worth 100 victory points (which for the bridge near Artain and both hexes in Merden meant two objective hexes of 50 points each). These, along with unit elimination, provide the basis for the victory point levels, all which must be accomplished in ten turns.

There is a lot of variation for the set up for the Americans given that they can be set up anywhere on the board. The Germans are restricted to the middle third of the board and should be set up first before the American side sets up.

Scenario #2

This is the scenario depicting the famous American landing on Omaha Beach on D-Day. In the original scenario, the American force was described as being elements of the 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions. However, given the smallness of the area, I just listed units of the 1st Infantry Division, plus the 2nd Ranger Battalion (which historically was

assigned to the 29th Infantry Division for the invasion). As in the previous scenario, because there is a beach, all inland hexes are given elevations of two levels higher than would normally be the case. One will notice that the map is not as long as the standard mapboard. This is because the scenario instructions of the original scenario prohibit the placement of, and movement into, of units in hexes east of Hexrow 23,xx, so I just deleted that portion of map since it is not used. There are no reinforcements for the Germans and none for the Americans past the initial entry of their forces on Turn 1

In Panzer Leader there is a special set of rules for amphibious invasions which account for the presence of landing craft as invading units are placed on the board and move towards the shore. In West Front we have landing craft and so I used them instead of trying to duplicate the original rules. All dismounted units are loaded in LCVPs and all mounted units (like HQs and Leaders) and vehicular units are mounted on LCMs, except for the DD Tanks which are amphibious. One will notice that the American infantry battalion HQs and their leaders are of the dismounted variety. This is because on the first few waves of an invasion the vehicles for the leaders and headquarters will be left behind, only to be landed later after the beach is secured (in theory). However the regimental and divisional HQs, and their attendant Leaders are all mobile. This is due to the fact that HQs of regimental level and above are always mobile and so I decided that their leaders will be mobile also.

Because the Americans have Naval Support Fire in the original scenario I assigned off the board artillery whose total firepower is equivalent to the first turn NASP firepower in the original game. This was divided up into four “ships” each with two batteries each (one representing the forward turrets and the other representing the aft turrets). The “ship” names are historical as those ships were there on D-Day. The ships with the heavier guns were placed further out from the beach (about 2,000 meters) while the ships with lighter guns were placed closer to the beach (about 1,000 meters).

On the German side I am using a set up that was described in the General magazine. The five Forts in the original scenario I made into two Pillboxes, two Bunkers, and one Trench in West Front. The Minefields are all Level 2, due to the minefields in Panzer Leader making 2-1 attacks.

Victory conditions in the original scenario were based on control of the towns on the board at the end of the game. To facilitate this I made each town hex on the board an objective hex worth 30 victory points each and made the victory levels dependent on control of a given number of them. Unit elimination is also present which can swing the victory point level one way or the other at the end of the game, thus causing the Americans to win or lose regardless of the number of town hexes that they control. However, there fifteen turns in the scenario to accomplish them.

There is a lot of variety possible for the Germans in their initial set up as they have the entire mapboard, except in the water. The Americans do not have much variety due to the fact that they have a lot units coming ashore, all on Turn 1, and things can get a might crowded on the top hexline although they may change who arrives in which hex..

Scenario #3

This is the scenario depicting the famous British landing on Gold Beach on D-Day. In the original scenario it lists the British 79th Armoured Division as the principal landing unit. This is incorrect. The actual principle landing unit was the British 50th Infantry Division, with the 79th Armoured Division providing support units for the invasion. Again as in the previous two scenarios we have beachfront property, thus all of the inland hexes are two elevations higher than they would normally be. Again as in the last scenario, not the whole mapboard is used as units are prohibited from being placed in or moved into any hex west of Hexrow X on board B (or J on Board D) on the Panzer Leader boards. Thus I did not include that section of the boards when I made the mapboard for this scenario. This caused a problem as it put the terrain on the board slightly out of sink with what it would be on a full board, thus causing the loss of some sea hexes on the top. I solved this by adding an extra hexline on top so there is sufficient water for the landing craft to land in. Also in this scenario the bridge just outside of Artain is missing from the mapboard. This is because the bridge is considered to be demolished and unusable in the original scenario. There is no reinforcements for the Germans and none of the British beyond the initial entry of their forces on Turn 1.

Again as in the last scenario the Allied force is coming on landing craft. So I followed the same guidelines in setting them as in the previous scenario. All dismounted units land in LCVs and vehicular units land in LCMs, except for the DD Tank units which are amphibious and may land by themselves. Speaking of the DD Tanks, in the original scenario each DD Tank counter is assumed to have four vehicles in it. But in West Front they have only three vehicles max. Since there were six DD Tanks counters equaling 24 tank, I just gave the British eight DD Tank units which would total 24 vehicles anyway. As before the Allied infantry battalion commanders, along with their respective HQs are dismounted. Also the Allies receive naval gunfire support, though not as much as in Scenario #2. This time I put the firepower into two “ships”, each with two batteries, about 1,500 meters away from the beach as off the board artillery. The names of the “ships” are historical as they were both there on D-Day.

On the German side I am using a set up I found in an old wargaming periodical from many years ago. The four Forts that the Germans receive in the original scenario I made into one Pillbox, two Bunkers, and one Trench. The Minefields are all Level 2, based on the 2-1 attack minefields in Panzer Leader.

The victory conditions in the original scenario were based on the number of the towns controlled at the end of the game. Control of the bridge at the hexside between hexes 15,8 and 16,8 also counted towards victory. To simulate this I put objective hexes in every town hex on the board, valued at 30 victory points each. I also put objective hexes in the two previously mentioned hexes that share that bridge. Unit elimination is also counted in the scenario. There are fifteen turns to accomplish the various victory levels.

There is plenty of variation for the Germans as they may set up anywhere on the board. The British, as with the Americans in the previous scenario, are rather restricted as they are confined to entering on the top hexline but they may change which units enter in which hex.

Scenario #4

This scenario depicts an American attack towards St. Lo by the elements of the U.S. 29th Infantry Division. This scenario is supposed to show how tough fighting through the hedgerows was in Normandy, without any hedgerows being on the map. The mapboard consists of two Panzer Leader boards, A and C, placed lengthwise. The Germans set up anywhere west of Hexrow 33,xx and the Americans set up anywhere east of Hexrow 32,xx. The scenario is fifteen turns long. There are no reinforcements for either side.

The Americans, being the attacker, have a pretty straight forward set up. A special note should be made about the 81mm Mortar units in American armored forces. In Panzer Leader an 81mm Mortar unit and one halftrack, both later replaced by a single M-21 SPM unit, were assigned to the Armored Infantry Battalion in a Combat Command. This counter represents six mortars or SPMs. In reality, this unit is actually split up between the Armored Infantry and Tank battalions, each getting a unit of three SPMs. In West Front, the M-4 SPM unit serves this function with only three strength points, and both battalions getting one unit each. In the original scenario the tank battalion received a full strength SPM platoon, so I gave the tank battalion two M-4 units to reflect this. The tank battalion is missing one tank company, presumably somewhere else in the 29th Infantry Division, and one of its on-board companies is equipped with M-4/76mm Shermans, representing the first arrival of these tanks into the fighting.

The Germans also have a pretty straight forward set up. Being the defenders they naturally get Improved Positions for all their units. The Hetzer units present in the scenario do not necessarily represent themselves, as their introduction was still two months away, but instead represent makeshift tank destroyers based on rebuilt captured French AFVs. Given that the Germans have only two dismounted 75mm ATG units in the original scenario, totally eight guns, I opted to give the Germans four 75mm ATG units at two strength points each.

The victory conditions in the original scenario were based on the number of town hexes captured and controlled by the Americans on Board A at the end of the game. To reflect this I made each town hex in the western half of the mapboard an objective hex, each worth 30 victory points. Since unit elimination is also part of West Front, I factored this into the victory levels.

There is a lot of room for variation in the set up, especially each side gets one half of the mapboard to set up on. However, the eastern half of the mapboard does not really play that much of a factor in the game, being only a set up place for the Americans, as almost all the action occurs on the western half in the course of the game.

Scenario #5

This scenario represents the initial British attack in Operation Goodwood. This scenario is an excellent example of how Panzer Leader takes a very big battle and shrinks it down, keeping a proper pre-portion of both the opposing forces and map size. In the original scenario description the British force consists of elements of the 11th and Guards Armoured Divisions while the Germans have elements of the 1st SS and 21st Panzer Divisions. Given the size of the forces in the scenario I reduced this down to just the Guards Armoured facing the 1st SS Panzer to simplify command and control for both sides. Again, as in Scenarios 2 and 3, the Board B is used, along with A and C, thus creating the situation where all the inland hexes are two elevation levels higher than they would normally be in a scenario. The scenario is ten turns long, not much time for the British to accomplish their objectives. There are no reinforcements for either side.

The British, who are the aggressors here, set up north of Hexline xx,20 and west of the minor river that starts from the bottom of the map at hexes 8/9, 30 and runs north to the sea at the top of the map. Their AFV units may only set up between Hexlines xx,10 and xx,20. For the Sherman units I used the four strength point platoons, each with one Firefly and three Sherman tanks. In the original scenario, Bren Carrier units were used for all of the transport. However, in West Front they can only be used for the Bren Carrier infantry units, for the rest of the infantry units I supplied them with the White Halftrack units. The British receive eight Typhoon fighter-bomber aircraft in this scenario.

The Germans, who are the defender, set up anywhere south of Hexline xx,20 and also anywhere east of the north-south river mentioned above and south of Hexline xx,10. However they can not set up in any town hex of Grancelles, representing the historical fact that the Germans abandoned Caen after the British took part of it in an earlier battle. By the looks of the set up the Germans have a wide open right flank and in fact they do. However, since the British armor is restricted in its set up and will take time to exploit this flank, the Germans will have time to shift units over to cover it. In the original scenario, the Germans had four halftrack units, in this version I linked them to four of the anti-aircraft artillery units to make them self-propelled.

In the original scenario, the victory conditions are based on British control of all town and bridge hexes on Board A. In West Front I made all town hexes and both sides of the bridge hexsides objective hexes, in between Hexlines xx,10 and xx,20. Note that the British start the game in control of all of the objective hexes west of the north-south river. Also the British to maintain a loss rate of less than 3-2 over the Germans in order to win. I adjusted the victory levels to account for this as unit elimination is a natural part of any West Front scenario.

There is a lot of variation in the set up for both sides, within their set up zones, although the British are rather restrained as their armor is restricted to a small area.

Scenario #6

This scenario is a prime example of why Panzer Leader was a rush job in its design and development. In the original scenario, the scenario title is “The Reichwald” and it describes an engagement between the Canadian 2nd Infantry and the German 84th Infantry Divisions on 7 September 1944. Well the 2nd Infantry did engage the 84th Infantry in the Reichwald, but it was in February of 1945 when this happened. In September of 1944, the German 84th Infantry was in the process of being rebuilt after being almost destroyed in Normandy, and the 2nd Infantry was in Holland pushing north and engaging elements of the German 85th Infantry Division. Ironically the scenario pretty much depicts the action between the 2nd and the 85th near the town of Woendracht, which is what I renamed the scenario. The scenario uses one Panzer Leader board, that being Board D, and is ten turns long. Both sides start the scenario with their complete forces on board, there are no reinforcements for either side.

The Canadians are set up west of Hexrow 8,xx. Their set up and composition is pretty straight forward. I broke up the heavy mortar unit into two sections in this scenario. The trucks are mated with the heavy artillery and mortars, and the Bren Carriers with their Bren Carrier infantry. However, I had some left over trucks and carriers so I converted them to Loyd Carriers and mated them to the 6 Pdr ATGs.

The Germans are set up east of Hewrow 7,xx. Being the defender they, of course, get their Improved Positions. Their set up is pretty conventional and is centered in and around the town of Nece, with the supporting mortars and artillery further to the rear. The halftracks in the original scenario I made into unarmored halftracks and assigned them to the artillery. The trucks I assigned to the fourth company of the infantry battalion to transport all of its assets. The Germans receive one Block, which I placed on the road in front of Nece.

The victory conditions in the original scenario were based on control of the town of Nece at the end of the game and on the amount of losses the Canadians took during the game. These were easy enough to duplicate in West Front. Each town hex in Nece is an objective hex worth 200 points. The victory levels were adjusted to account for Canadian losses, although German will help redress the balance.

There is not much variation possible for the Canadians, given their restricted set up area and limited game objective. The German have a little more variation possible, given a greater area, but are still forced to defend one town to the exclusion of all else.

Scenario #7

This scenario depicts the attack of CCB of the U.S. 4th Armored Division, during the encirclement of Nancy. This combat command was the southern pincer of the envelopment of that city. The Germans are defending with elements of the 553rd

Volksgrenadier Division. The scenario uses two mapboards, Boards A and D, placed length-wise and is ten turns long. Both sides have their forces set up on the board, there are no reinforcements for either side.

The Americans have a standard combat command, at least what is considered to be a standard combat command in the Panzer Leader game. They are set up west of Hexrow 8,xx. The Germans have a Volksgrenadier battalion, with various supporting elements, including a part of the divisional anti-tank battalion. They are set up east of Hexrow 8,xx. Being the defender they get their Improved Positions. I placed the various German transport units with the artillery pieces.

The victory conditions in the original scenario are based on the control of the town of Grancelles at the end of the game, plus the amount of losses the Americans took during the game. These were easy to duplicate in West Front. Each town hex in Grancelles is an objective hex worth 30 points. The victory levels were adjusted to account for the Americans having to keep their losses down, although this can be off set by German losses.

There is not much variation in the American set up, given the limited set up area. The Germans on the other hand have a lot of variation. The set up that I used in this scenario concentrates on defending Grancelles, with minimal delaying forces. Alternately, the German player could set up the majority of his forces forward of Grancelles in order to slow down the Americans, in essence, trading losses for eating up time.

Scenario #8

This scenario depicts an assault by a reinforced American armored infantry battalion against a German held town defended by the instructors, cadre, and students of an officer training school. The mapboard consists of two Panzer Leader boards, D and A, and are placed side by side. The scenario is ten turns long and all forces start the game set up on the board, there are no reinforcements for either side.

The Americans set up anywhere south of Hexline xx,10. As usual with the armored forces, the Americans have an 81mm Mortar unit with a halftrack in the original scenario. I combined these two and made two M-4 SPM units, one for the armored infantry battalion, and the other for the tank company. These, along the M-7 SPA unit, give the Americans some good indirect fire and smoke capability. The set up is fairly conventional, with the three armored infantry companies approaching from three directions and the tank company poised to move up and support by fire from a nearby hill.

The Germans are set up in the town of Grancelles, in fact they can not set up anywhere else. A purely infantry force, supported by three nasty 88mm ATG units. Being the defender, they get their Improved Positions of course. The force is rather spread out,

having to defend all of Grancelles, but at least has a lot of town hexes to retreat into and the Americans force their way in.

The victory conditions in the original scenario require that the Americans control all of the town hexes of Grancelles by the end of Turn 6. This is a tall order, especially when trying to do this in West Front, and not exactly convertible to the computer game. So I merely made each town hex in Grancelles an objective hex worth 30 points. As unit elimination is an automatic part of the game I varied the victory levels to account for this also.

The Americans have a lot of variation possible in their set up, given that they can set up on half of the board. The Germans on the other hand are restricted to setting up in the town of Grancelles and are rather limited in their possible variations.

Scenario #9

This scenario is supposed to depict the famous bridge capture at Nijmegen during Operation Market-Garden. In truth, the scenario depicts the situation in and around Nijmegen. The Allies have a mixed nationality force consisting of elements of the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division and units of the British Guards Armoured Division, all under command of the British. The defending Germans have a force from the 9th SS Panzer Division. The scenario again uses Panzer Leader Boards A and D, again side by side, in a slightly different configuration. The game is ten turns long, with both sides starting the game with their entire respective forces set up on the board. There are no reinforcements for either side.

The Allied force consists of an American airborne infantry battalion, a reduced British tank regiment, a British field artillery regiment, and a few support vehicles. The airborne infantry battalion is a standard type, minus some of its heavy machine gun platoons. The armoured regiment has four vehicle Sherman tank units, each with one Firefly and three regular Sherman tanks. In the original scenario, the British also had a Valentine Bridgelayers, with one Bridge. However that unit does not exist in West Front so I substituted a Churchill AVRE unit for them. All of the Allied units are deployed south of the west-east river that stretches across the length of the board from Hexes 7/8,20 to Hexes 23/24,0. They are set up so as to threaten every bridge crossing and keep the Germans spread out.

The German force consists of a panzergrenadier battalion with some anti-aircraft and anti-tank support, plus some limited artillery. They are set up north of the above mentioned river. Do to the fact that they have to cover six bridges, this means that they are pretty well spread out.

In the original scenario, the victory conditions were dependent on Allied control of at least two bridges over the long east-west river at the end of the game. This could include a bridge laid by the Valentine Bridgelayers. However, only those bridges north of Hexrow

16,xx counted for the victory conditions. So the bridge closest to the east edge of the board did not count, although it still had to be covered in order prevent a flanking maneuver by the Allies. To duplicate this I made two hexes bordering each bridge hexside into objective hexes worth 100 points. In order to win the Allies must capture at least seven out of ten of these hexes. Of course with unit elimination being standard in West Front, this can lessen or increase the number of objective hexes required for victory depending of the amount of casualties on both sides.

There is a lot of variation for the set up on both sides, given the large set up areas for each. But the Germans have to cover all the bridges and this can have an effect on how they are set up.

Scenario #10

This scenario depicts the epic struggle for the town of Arnhem as units of the British 1st Airborne Division fend off attacks from German Kampfgruppe Harzer. It is a pale imitation of the real event, but still a good scenario. For once the roles are reversed as the Germans are the aggressors and the British the defenders. The scenario uses only one Panzer Leader mapboard, that being A. The scenario is ten turns long and both sides begin the game with their entire respective forces set up on the board. There are no reinforcements.

The British are set up in the town of Grancelles, which is the only place where they may set up. They have an airborne infantry battalion reinforced by some engineers and anti-tank guns. In the original scenario they only have rifle and engineer units for their infantry, however in West Front they have airborne rifle and engineer units as is fitting for an airborne unit. Although they may set up anywhere in Grancelles, I placed them in the town hexes north of the river, plus that clear hex surrounded by the town, as is historically fitting. Being the defender, they naturally have Improved Positions.

The Germans are a mixed Waffen SS and Wehrmacht force. They are set up anywhere on the board at least three hexes away from the nearest British unit. All of the units match the units from the original scenario except for the Pz IVh units, which were a single five tank unit in Panzer Leader, but I had to break down into two small platoons equaling five tanks in West Front. For the transport, I used the wagons for the various artillery and mortar units, except for the 88mm ATG for which I gave it the halftrack in the form of an unarmored halftrack unit. The majority of the units in the German force are Wehrmacht as these were a training battalion that was pressed into combat duty during the fight for the town.

In the original scenario, the victory conditions were based on how fast the Germans could take the town. As this was not possible in West Front, I merely made each town hex in Grancelles an objective hex of 30 points and based the victory conditions on how many town hexes the Germans had at the end of the game. Of course, the automatic unit elimination conditions that are in West Front can swing the total point either way.

There is a lot of variation for the German set up, given their large set up area. The British on the other hand only have the town hexes in Grancelles. They could of course utilize the town hexes on the south side of the river, this will force the Germans to set up further away on that side. However, this will also weaken their defense as they will have to defend more territory with what units that they have.

Conclusion

This concludes the first article of Ode to Panzer Leader. There will be more articles in the future covering not only the remaining scenarios in the game, but also scenarios that were published in the General magazine. But until then enjoy these ones.