

DESIGN NOTES FOR SCENARIOS OF ODE TO PANZERBLITZ IV

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Due to the success of the Ode to Panzerblitz series of scenarios for East Front II, the call for more scenarios has come to me and so here is the next set. These six scenarios follow the particular theme of having all occurred in 1942. They were originally published in the article "The Forgotten Year: Panzerblitz Situations for 1942" by David Howery in the General Vol.26, #2. These scenarios certainly enjoyed great popularity as they were more fully developed than the ones for 1941 which were seen in the last set. They went far in showing other authors how well the early years of the war could be portrayed if the scenarios were properly developed.

As before these scenarios are converted to the same standard as those of the previous Ode to Panzerblitz sets. Again for the original design notes on these standards, refer to the first Ode to Panzerblitz, which deal with the set up and construction of the scenarios. Variables such as changing the environmental conditions, morale, or changing the orders of battles for either or both sides, I leave to the judgment of the individual players.

In five of the six scenarios, one will note that the Germans have the 120mm Mortar, a weapon that was not officially made part of the army inventory until 1943. However in Russia, German units freely availed themselves of captured Russian 120mm Mortars and ammunition, something which they had large stocks of from the previous year's battles. Although captured ammunition stocks ran out by the middle of 1942, the German military/industrial complex continued to supply ammo for the captured mortars until they could manufacture their own version of the 120mm.

The six scenarios recreate specific battles in various parts of the year. The details of the battles are rather general in the scenarios, given the nature of the Panzerblitz board game, but the unit designations are historical.

Scenario #32

This scenario depicts the German defense of a vital supply road against Russian partisan, cavalry, and armor attacks. The road starts in hex 0,3 and ends in hex 34,3. The Germans are setup north of Hexline --, 10, in the customary improved positions as befits the defender. The Russians have five partisan units (plus a leader) set up in the same area as the Germans, at least three hexes away from the nearest German unit. The rest of the Russian units enter on the southern edge of the board on Turn 1. This scenario has a low unit density so there is lots of room for maneuvering on both sides. The conversion of the scenario units was fairly straight forward. One of the two German 20mm AA units in the boardgame scenario I made into a two self-propelled AA units (same number of guns as in the single ground mounted version though). This took care of one halftrack unit and two more I made into unarmored versions for the 50mm ATGs. On the Russian side I mounted the Russian rifle units on the tanks as they had no transport of their own.

Although the original scenario called for Russian T-34c's, I had to use the T-34 M41 version as that was the most advanced available at this time. However, their machine guns could not be mounted on tanks so I gave trucks by default, even though the original scenario does have any trucks for the Russians.

The Russian victory conditions were based on having friendly units in positions from where they can fire on the supply road, thus interdicting it. I duplicated this by establishing a series of objective hexes for the Russians to capture. All these hexes overlook the supply road at some point with the closer ones that can see more road hexes being worth more victory points. The German victory conditions are based on enemy unit destruction, but this is a natural victory condition for both sides in East Front II.

There is plenty of variation for the German set up as they can set up anywhere north of Hexline --, 10. The Russian partisan units can then set up anywhere in the same area afterward as long as they maintain at least a three distance from the nearest German unit and place only one partisan unit per hex. There is not much variation for the entry hexes for the remaining Russian units as southern half of the board has restrictive terrain, thus limiting the number of optimum entry points.

Scenario #33

This scenario depicts a German armored assault against a Russian infantry position supported by tanks. The Russians are set up anywhere east of Hexrow 11,--. Being the defender they are of course set up in improved positions. The Germans enter on the west side of the board, either between Hexes 0,0 and 0,10; 0,11 and 0,20; or 0,21 and 0,30. They must all enter on Turn 1. Once on the board they can freely move anywhere. While the logical entry area would be in the southern third of the board, the Russians have every covered hex in their setup area occupied and Germans will have to survive a hail of fire to get through it. The vast majority of the Russian force is dismounted, but there is a tank brigade centrally located on the east edge of the board that can shift to whichever board the Germans are making their breakthrough attempt. The original German set up called for 10 Pz IVh and 10 Pn IIIj units. I gave the German their 50 Pz IIIj tanks but I substituted the 50 Pz IVh with 50 Pz IVf/2's (the Pz IVh was not yet available). The Russians again get the T-34 M41 version of that tank as it is the most modern version available at the time.

The original victory conditions required the Germans to exit units off of the east edge of the board while Russians were required to just kill German units. For the Germans I have established exit hexes on the east edge of the board but these are not enough to secure victory as Germans will not have enough surviving units to exit once they get through the Russians. Thus I established a series of Russian held objective hexes for the Germans to capture in order to help secure a path across the board for follow up units to travel through (which is outside the scope of this scenario). Of course, both sides have the destruction of enemy units to give them points too.

There is a lot of variation in the Russian setup, as long as they stay east of the eleventh Hexrow. The Germans have less variation as they may only alter which third of the board, northern, middle, or southern, they choose to enter on as well as the order of unit entry.

Scenario #34

Scenario #34 is supposed to be a mobile German defense against an attacking Russian tank corps. The Germans do not have enough transport units to carry their whole force and besides, there is not much room to conduct a mobile defense. The Germans set up on the southern two thirds of the board, south of Hexline --,10. Being the defender they get the Improved Positions. The Russians enter on the northern edge of the board at any point. However they must travel through restrictive terrain which is going to slow them down as there is only one road that goes from north to south through it. In the original scenario the German received SG IIIg's. However these were just coming into service at the time and were likely not at the front yet in great numbers. Thus I substituted them with SG IIIb's. As usual, the Russian medium tanks were the T-34 M41 version and for the heavy tanks I used the KV-1 M42 version. As the Russians did not have enough trucks to carry all of their units, both in the original scenario and this one too, I mounted the rifle units on the tanks so everybody had enough transport. In the original scenario the Russians were giving four wagon units, but I changed them to trucks as a tank corps would not have any wagons in it. Due to the large number of Recon units in the original Russian order of battle, I put three of them into a motorcycle battalion.

The victory conditions in the original scenario required the Russians to establish a four hex wide corridor from the north to the south edges by the games end, free of any German units. The German victory conditions were based on how many Russian units that they destroyed. The German victory condition is automatically part of the East Front II system as both sides get points for destroying enemy units. To duplicate the Russian victory condition I established a series of German objective hexes for the Russian player to capture. The closer one gets to the south edge of the board, the more points are the objective points worth. The cheap ones close to the northern edge are unoccupied and thus easy for the Russians to capture but the ones in the German controlled part of the board will have to be fought for.

The Germans have the most variation as they can change their set up, as long as they stay south of Hexline --,10. The Russians on the other hand can only change the entry points of their units and the order of entry. Again, as in Scenario #32, the Russians are limited in their entry points due to restrictive terrain and the limited time they have to win this scenario.

Scenario #35

Scenario #35 is listed as an armor action, but is in reality a Russian armor supported infantry assault upon a German infantry position that is counterattacked by German armor. The Russians are heavily reinforced by artillery in this one. These include 122mm and 152mm howitzers, and BM-13 MRLs. Unfortunately they must all be brought onto the board, thus wasting some shooting time. The Russians still have the T-34 M41 medium tanks and KV-1 M42 heavy tanks. The original scenario called for 20 SU-76 vehicles, but since that vehicle was not available yet I substituted SU-12 self-propelled artillery trucks as these are surely what the original author meant but did not have the counters for. On the German side there were originally 50 Pz IVh tanks, but because these were not available yet I substituted 30 Pz IVf/2 and 20 Pz IIIj tanks. Because the German force is a mechanized force, I made all the 20mm AA units self-propelled as would appropriate with this type of unit. As the Germans are on the defensive, they are thus given improved positions for their on board starting forces.

In the original scenario, the victory conditions for both sides were totally dependent on the number of German units destroyed. Since unit destruction is a natural victory condition in East Front II, this was not a problem. What was a problem was that Russian losses made no difference in the original scenario whereas in East Front II they can detract from the Russian point score. Thus to help make up for this problem I placed a number of German objectives on the board for the Russians to capture. As this scenario deals purely with unit destruction, there are no exit points for either side, although the Germans may want to withdraw units off of the board to save them from destruction.

There is a lot of variation possible in the German set, providing they stay in the southern two thirds of the board. The Russians of course can alter the entry hexes on the northern edge of the board and vary the order of unit entry. Because the northern one third of the board is open, and the scenario is twelve turns long instead of the usual ten, the Russians will be able to more quickly close with the enemy and be able to destroy more of them in order to maximize his point total.

Scenario #36

This scenario is interesting as it has Romanian units in it in place of the German ones. In the original scenario, weak German units were used to simulate the Romanian ones, but in East Front II, the Romanians exist as a separate force. I thus converted the German units in the original scenario to the equivalent Romanian ones. These are set up on the board in-between Hexrows 10,-- and 20,--, exclusively. Being on the defense they are set up in improved positions. On the Russian side I broke down the Russian tank force into two tank brigades and an independent tank battalion. All tanks are now the T-34 M43 model. I converted the two 76.2mm ATG units in the original scenario into 76.2mm field gun units as they are the same weapon and in the offense are more likely to be used as regular artillery than as AT guns. The two Russian Recon units I made into a weak motorcycle battalion. Due to shortage of transport units in the Russian force, most of the infantry is riding on tanks. This can cause a problem as this separates the infantry from its

battalion support units as the tanks race far ahead of them during the course of the game, but then the infantry will have the tanks to support them.

The original victory conditions were rather strange in that both sides get victory points for exiting their units off of the south edge of the board. I thus gave two exit hexes each to the Russians and the Romanians. The victory level point spread is such that the Romanians can not win by merely exiting their entire force off of the board, the Russians have more than enough to exit off the board themselves despite the point deficit caused by the exited Romanians unit and still win. Thus the Romanians will have to leave some of their units on board to exact some casualties from the Russians. This brings up the next original victory condition, destroyed enemy units for both sides. East Front II handles this quite nicely. There was one other original victory condition for the Romanian player, he received victory points for every Russian unit left on the board. I accounted for this by adjusting the victory point level spread in the scenario.

There is not much variation on this one. The Romanians can alter their setup but are restricted to that nine hexrow section of the board. The Russians can alter their order of entry onto the board and the entry hexes but due to the restrictive terrain in their entry areas I doubt that they will change them.

Scenario #37

Scenario #37 depicts a German armored assault on a Russian infantry defense, backed up by some heavy tanks. The Russians are deployed north of Hexrow 17,-- and being on the defensive have improved positions. In the original scenario the Russians had two 76.2mm ATG units. Since these were from their artillery regiment, I had the choice of either using them as AT units as in the original scenario or as field artillery. I opted for field artillery as the Russians were a little short on artillery in this scenario. I also made three of the original Recon units into a dismounted motorcycle battalion which I used to help add depth to the Russian defensive positions. The heavy tanks are the KV-1 M42 version. The German force enters on the southern edge of the board, either in the eastern half or the western half, although once entered, they may move to any part of the board. The original Pz IVh tanks I replaced with the Pz IVf/2 version. The Tiger I tanks do not normally come into action in East Front II until January 1943. Indeed there is some debate on whether there were Tiger tanks involved in the relief attempt on Stalingrad or not. However some sources say that there were so I left them in this scenario. The inclusion of the Wespe unit raises some eyebrows. It is there in the original scenario yet as most people know it did not come into service until late spring 1943. The Wespe does not represent itself but instead represents experimental SP artillery vehicles which were based on captured French tank chassis which were undergoing combat testing in the late fall and winter of 1942. Since East Front II does not have units to represent these vehicles, the Wespe unit must be used as a substitute.

The original victory conditions included enemy unit destruction for the Russians and creating a north-south corridor from the northern edge to the southern edge of the board

by the games end by the Germans. The unit destruction victory condition is a natural part of the game for both sides but for the corridor victory condition I created a series of Russian owned objective hexes for the German to capture in order to simulate the corridor.

The Russians can vary the setup of their starting forces as long as they stay north of Hexrow 17,--. The Germans can vary the entry hexes of their unit as long as they are either on the eastern or western half of the board. They can also vary the order of entry for their units.

Conclusion

This marks the fourth installment of the Ode to Panzerblitz series. There will be one more installment which will include the remaining scenarios from the old General magazine. Until then enjoy the scenario.