

## DESIGN NOTES FOR PANZERBLITZ: BARBAROSSA 1941

By  
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Panzerblitz: Barbarossa 1941 was originally a 21-scenario set created by James Johnson and posted on Boardgame Geek and Consimworld. He created these in response to a need for more 1941 scenarios in Panzerblitz. He felt that the ones published in the General Vol.13, #3 way back in 1976 were very weak. But he also understood the limitations (lack of source material and publishing constraints) that the author of those scenarios, Ramiro Cruz, was under when he made them. Although the series was made for Panzerblitz, James used a modified rules set based on the rules from Panzerblitz's sister games *Panzer Leader* and *Arab-Israeli Wars*. These included some new features to the basic game which I converted to East Front.

**Variable Morale Levels:** Units are assigned a morale level which determines the chances of recovering from a dispersal combat result. In other words recovery from dispersal is no longer automatic. The morale levels are A, B, C, and D, which correspond to morale levels of 70%, 60%, 50%, and 40% in East Front. A further restriction is that infantry (which would include SMG, ski, airborne, recon, and motorcycle troops) and rifle platoons are 10% lower than the morale level for the rest of the units of their side. This further applies to other support platoons within the rifle or infantry company (which are usually MG and Light Mortar units) but not to support platoons in their own companies. I used this feature in the Divided Ground series for the scenarios for *Arab Israeli Wars* and it seem appropriate to use it here.

**Russian Activation Rolls:** In the Russian movement phase of each game turn, those Russian units which the Russian player wants to move, must have a die rolled for each one to see if they can move that turn. In most scenarios a 1-4 result is required although in some of the later scenarios a 1-5 will suffice. If they do not make their required rolls, they may not move that turn. Units which enter the board during the game must also roll to see if they come on that turn. This rule simulates the confusion of orders from different command levels that Russian units suffered from during the early days of the war. I could not simulate this exactly in East Front as the programing did not allow it, so what I did was to freeze every Russian unit in place and starting on Turn 1 set a release percentage roll of 67% for the die roll of 1-4 and 83% for a die roll of 1-5. Russian units which enter the board during the scenario have the same percentage rolls as those units which start the game set up on the board. I set up the releases by battalion and independent support companies. Each headquarters and leader unit also had their own individual percentage numbers.

**Map Terrain Changes:** The scenarios use the standard Panzerblitz boards in East Front plus the six variant mapboards provided for this set. These boards have also been converted to East Front. Some scenarios require that the mapboard be of flat terrain. To achieve this I simply eliminated all Level 1 and 2 hexes on the map, plus any gullies that I use to separate adjacent hill masses. In other scenarios the hills have gentle slopes. For these I simply halved the elevation interval from the standard 50 meters to 25 meters per level and I also halved the number designations of all hill labels.

**Soviet Field Gun Counters:** Johnson introduced a new counter into the Panzerblitz family. It is the 122mm Field Gun counter (12-H-10-1-0). I have interpreted these counters to represent a pair of P obr. 31 122mm Field Guns in a direct fire role and that is what I place in the order of battles for each counter that I see in the scenario cards.

Soviet M-13 MRL Counters: Normally in Panzerblitz these units represent eight M-13 MRL vehicles, which is a battalion, but I believe that Johnson treated them like the tanks and now they represent four vehicles, which is a battery.

Weather Conditions: Panzerblitz does not normally have weather and environmental conditions but in some of the scenarios there is snow or mud to account for the reduction in movement allowances or allow for the use of special troops such as ski units.. Only in those scenario, which occur in the late fall and early winter, will the environment reflects those conditions, while the rest will be the standard normal ground and perfect visibility.

Scenario 1 – First Clash of Armor: Basically made the terrain flat and froze the Russians with a release percentage of 67%.

Scenario 2 – Boldin's Counterattack vs German Ninth Army: Terrain is flat and the standard 67% release for the Russians.

Scenario 3 – Counterstrike vs Panzergruppe Kleist: Terrain is flat and the standard 67% release for the Soviets..

Scenario 4 – Guderian at the Dniepr: Made the terrain into gentle hills and of course froze the Russians with a release percentage of 67%. The scenario called for power boats but I could not load or unload them as was no shallow water in the river to do this, so I replaced them with rafts.

Scenario 5 – Katukov's Mobile Defense: The ground is flat, no hills or slopes. Standard 67% release for the Soviets.

Scenario 6 - Vatutin Checks Mainstein: The terrain is normal and the standard 67% release for the Soviets.

Scenario 7 – Escape from Smolensk: The terrain is normal and the standard 67% release for the Soviets. Also had to substitute a T-35 heavy tank for the T-100 heavy tank as East Front does not have that tank in its system.

Scenario 8 – Storm From the North: Made the terrain into gentle hills and the standard 67% release for the Soviets.

Scenario 9 – The Cossacks are Coming: The terrain is flat and the Soviets have free movement from the beginning.

Scenario 10 – Barbarossa's First Reverse: Made the terrain into gentle hills and the Soviets have the standard 67% release.

Scenario 11 – Kleist Hooks Over the Dniepr: The terrain is flat and the Soviets have the standard 67% release.

Scenario 12 – Breaking the Ring of Steel: The terrain is normal and the Soviets have an 83% release to come on the board as reinforcements.

Scenario 13 – Katukov vs. Guderian: The terrain is normal and the Soviets have an 83% release.

Scenario 14 – Return to Old Battlefields: This was a tough one. Johnson shorted the Germans a lot of trucks as they are supposed to enter the board, yet some of the support weapons can't enter the board because of lack of transport. In addition, the original victory conditions require that the Germans get as many units into the northeast half of the board, which is impossible given the vast size of the Russian force. So I changed the victory conditions to mere units killed and completely motorized the entire German force to get them into action with the Russians quicker than if they had to walk. Also the Russians had some defensive works from the Arab-Israeli Wars to include Improved Positions, Forts, Blocks, and Trenches. The Improved Positions and Blocks already exist in East Front and the Forts translated to Trenches and Bunkers, but the Trench counters were supposed to represent Anti-tank Ditches. As East Front does not have those type of defensive positions, I had to create it. I used the method out of the Divided Ground where I lay down a Gully hexside and then overlay it with an Escarpment hexside. Works like a charm in Divided Ground but unfortunately East Front does not have Escarpment hexsides, so I had to substitute it with Cliff hexsides. This works as it keeps the vehicles from crossing the ditch but it also keeps the infantry from crossing as well. Well sometimes we have to make sacrifices in realism for playability. The terrain is normal except that the swamps do not exist on the boards for this scenario. The Soviet units have an 83% release.

Scenario 15 – The Hungarian Rapid Corps: The terrain is normal and the Soviet units have the standard 67% release.

Scenario 16 – Katukov's Spoiling Attack: This was another tough scenario, mostly because of the number of total units involved in such a small area. The terrain is normal except that Board 7 has no hilltop or slope hexes, it is basically flat terrain. The Russians enter on three sides of the board, all forces have an 83% of coming on the board. The ground conditions are muddy, thus slowing everybody down quite a bit.

Scenario 17 – Kampfgruppe Eberbach: The terrain is normal and the Soviet units have the standard 67% release. However, the ground conditions are snow and the water is frozen.

Scenario 18- Guderian Checked at Last: The terrain is normal and the Soviet units enter the board with an 83% chance. The ground condition is snow and the water is frozen.

Scenario 19 – The Spires of the Kremlin: This scenario has a small number of units. Board 7 again has no hilltop or slope hexes, it is basically flat terrain. In addition, the other board has low hills so they are half their height. There is also a bridge across the river, per the original scenario instructions. The Soviets have the standard 67% release. The ground conditions are snow but the water is not frozen, it is normal. (Historically the river was frozen over but the ice was not thick enough to support men and light vehicles, hence this compromise.)

Scenario 20 – Zhukov Strikes Back: This is another large scenario in terms of units. The board has the standard terrain features, no changes here. The ground conditions is snow and the water is frozen. The Russians have an 83% release for both those units that start on the board and also for reinforcements.

Scenario 21 – Defending the Path of Retreat: The terrain depicts wilderness, at least wilderness as the Russians define it. There is only one town, that being Bednost, the rest of the towns have been made into woods hexes. There are no hilltops or slopes on Board 2, it is flat. The ground conditions are snow and the water is frozen. For once no one starts the game set up on the board. The Germans enter first and must quickly set up a defense. The Russians enter second and their units have an 83% chance

of entering.

Conclusion: It is my hope that East Front players enjoy these new scenarios for the year 1941. Playing through them in order will show both the gradual erosion of German strength over time and well as the growing strength the Russians and their slowing learning how to fight the Germans. Certainly a fascinating tactical study.