

501 CITY-FIGHT-IN-FOUR

DYO for UP FRONT

By Marcus Watney

Hardly an issue of the *GENERAL* goes by without yet another *ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER* scenario. But where are the new scenarios for *UP FRONT*, *BANZAI* and *DESERT WAR!* Are we card enthusiasts to be shrugged off with just the 24 rather uninteresting ones provided with the games themselves?

Two years ago, I got fed up waiting for someone else to do the hard work and grudgingly sat down to do it myself. But it took only one evening's concentration to convert my frustration with the *UP FRONT* scenarios into the remedy of "501 City-Fight-in-Four." It has proved to be a most productive evening's work, for the result has brought hours of gaming pleasure throughout the European Region of AHKS and at the clubs I attend. In England, it has become the standard *UP FRONT* game, played more often than any other single scenario.

Quite simply, the secret of its success lies in its flexibility. Each player is allocated 501 Design-Your-Own points with which to play the City Fight scenario (Scenario B). The removal of the first four Woods cards, the special rules and the victory conditions remain unchanged; the only rule which is deleted is 43.41. Additionally, snipers have to be purchased by both sides as per Rule 43.6, and if a second sniper is required, he must be purchased at the same time as the first. But the really big difference is that the game continues through *four* decks.

Now at last you can do more than dream about that King Tiger. At a cost of 656 points, this mammoth is doomed to remain in the box, unplayed, whichever of the 24 published scenarios you may choose. But critical to good play in 501 City-Fight-in-Four is Rule 43.4—which offers generous discounts for units bought in mid-game as reinforcements:

Arrival after one deck: x0.8
Arrival after two decks: x0.5
Arrival after three decks: x0.2

If you can design a defensive strategy using not more than 369 points, and survive with this squad for three whole decks, then this time the King Tiger will appear (like the cavalry over the hill) just in time to save the day for you even as the final cards are played. Arriving after three decks, its cost is now a modest 132 points.

Well that, at least, is the theory. But the great strength of this scenario is that for every strategy there is a counter. Time is the real enemy of the King Tiger, for if your opponent chooses to use all 501 points in his initial set-up, your 369-point squad is unlikely to survive long enough to hear the rumble of friendly tracks. And even if it does, just how much damage can even a King Tiger do in just one deck?

Like most people approaching 501 City-Fight-in-Four for the first time, in the early days I was obsessed with bringing on the heaviest armor I could afford at the start of the fourth deck. Many defeats later, I now prefer to bring on something more modest, but have it in action through at least the last two decks.

And here psychology plays an important role. Initial troops and reinforcements must all be selected and scheduled by both players secretly before either side begins to set up. And, while the actual cards to be brought on later may remain hidden until their entry, you must still reveal to your opponent the point values not yet in play as you set up your initial forces. Therefore, the make-up of your own squad will likely reflect your analysis of your opponent's character. If he is a renowned "tankie" you'd better buy at least a bazooka; but if the *banzai* charge is his specialty, perhaps a medium machinegun is a better investment. If you can be objective about your own style of play, try playing out of character once or twice when facing an opponent who thinks he knows you well; it's worth it just for that look of horror on his face.

I consider Scenario B easily the best of those published (though I also enjoy Scenario R, the Paratroop Drop). The City Fight has no specific attacker or defender, and has outstanding Victory Conditions. Because only men occupying buildings score Aggressive Action Points, it is one of the few scenarios in which the primary purpose of infiltration is often to seize a valuable bit of terrain (Rule 20.8) rather than merely to kill the enemy. It is also one of the few scenarios where discarding Brush or Wall onto an advancing enemy may make very good sense. Finally, the scenario is tailor-made for the deployment of two of my favorite weapons: the demolition charge and the flamethrower.

One limitation I have had to impose for purely practical reasons is the number of groups in which reinforcements may arrive: not more than two over the whole game. The first reinforcing batch arrives as Group E and the second as Group Z (appearing beyond Group E, not beyond Group A). If Group E does not exist when the second reinforcements arrive, they enter as Group E rather than as Group Z. Both reinforcing groups may appear at the same time. A reinforcing sniper does not count as a group.

Of course, it is important that players do not become too distracted by the prospect of late-arriving reinforcements. With 501 points to play with, it is perfectly feasible to have cheap armor in the front line from the very start. AHKS member Andy Daghish has perfected this technique of "all-up-front" and recommends a StuG IIIB at start. At the Spring 1988 AHKS weekend meeting, he used the hand described below with considerable success against the conventional American squad of Owen Walters:

Germans:

At Start:			
#1	Sgt Dittinger	MP:	51
#4	Schumacker	Rifle:	15
#8	Wollack	Rifle:	8
#9	Streich	Rifle:	13
#10	Wolff	Rifle:	17
#24	Cpl Steiner	MP:	36
#39	StuG IIIB		361
Total:	501 (at start 501)		

Americans:

At Start:			
#3 Fox	BAR:	44	
#5 Frattali	SAR:	14	
#6 Smith	SAR:	5	
#7 Anderson	SAR:	14	
#11 Greenwood	SAR:	16	
#17 Ransom	Carbine:	16	
#18 Sgt Allen	Carbine:	55	
#21 Maly	MP:	14	
#28 Shelley	Mortar:	61	
Deck 2:			
#35 M10 Wolverine		261.6(327x0.8)	
Total:	500.6 (at start 239)		

A similar hand for the Russians (again created by Andy Daghish) with a typical German force shown for comparison, is given below:

Russians:

At Start:			
#1 Sgt Rostov SAR:		40	
#8 Chernenko Rifle:		15	
#10 Kvasnikov Rifle:		4	
#11 Sokoloff Rifle:		7	
#13 Zaharoff Rifle:		14	
#14 Zayakov Rifle:		6	
#15 Uihailoff Rifle:		10	
#19 Commisar Dottski MP:		33	
#38 SU-85		372	
Total:	501 (at start 501)		

Germans:

At Start:	sniper	35		
#1	Sgt Dittinger	MP:	51	
#4	Schumacker	Rifle:	15	
#5	Schultz	Rifle:	10	
#7	Beck	Rifle:	5	
#8	Wollack	Rifle:	8	
#9	Streich	Rifle:	13	
#10	Wolff	Rifle:	17	
#12	Griess	LMG:	72	
#19	Schlaffer	AR:	18	
#24	Cpl Steiner	MP:	36	
Deck 2:				
#6	Bernhoff	Rifle:	20(25x0.8)	
#15	Volke	AR:	22.4(28x0.8)	
#20	Frantz	PSK:	52.8 (66x0.8)	
#26	Kubler	AR:	24 (30x0.8)	
Deck 3:				
#30	SPW 251/1		101 (202x0.5)	
Total:	500.2 (at start 280)			

Perhaps what these compositions demonstrate more than anything else is just how dangerous it is to assume armor will only appear as a reinforcement. A player who does not start his unit with a bazooka (or an AFV of his own) is just asking for trouble. How then can you best deploy your armor to avoid that inevitable bazooka? One trick of the trade, available to the Allied player only, is to bring whatever armor you can afford on at the very start and allocate it to group A. In the City Fight scenario, the Axis player sets up and moves first. It is usual to place the panzerschreck in Group C (or, if in play, Group D) so as to be well-positioned to ambush armor entering as Group E or Z. By placing frontline Allied armor in Group A, the panzerschreck is kept at arm's length, leaving the armor relatively free to shred enemy Groups A and B.

Perhaps the greatest pleasure that 501 City-Fight-in-Four provides is between the games. Over a long, solitary winter's evening, with the rain beating down on the window panes, what more pleasant entertainment can there be than designing new forces with which to astound and amaze your regular opponents at the next meeting? But to design well, you need to have a clear idea of your favorite nation's peculiarities and the demands of this scenario. Those are the considerations that the rest of this article will address.

ARMOR

So, what about that big tank then? Described below is a small, elite German force which must hold the baseline through three whole decks before salvation arrives. Group A is padding, and should hide in good terrain for as much of the game as possible; the sole purpose of this anti-tank rifle is to burn off unwanted Fire cards. Groups B and C are of comparable strength, each able to lay down eleven FP at Relative Range 3, but Group C has the better morale and will therefore be slightly forward of the other two.

Germans:

Group A:			
#16 Shaeffer	ATR:	15	
#5 Shultz	Rifle:	10	
Group B:			
#19 Schlaffer	AR:	18	
#15 Volke	AR:	28	
#3 Shussel	LMG:	54	
#2 Cpl Hessel	MP:	41	
Group C:			
#6 Bernhoff	Rifle:	25	
	panzerfaust	25	
#26 Kubler	AR:	30	
#12 Griess	LMG:	72	
#1 Sgt Dittinger	MP:	51	
Deck 4:			
#35 PzKw VIB		131.2(656x0.2)	
Total:	500.2 (at start 369)		

Be warned, not once have I won with this hand. The small size of the front-line squads limits the amount of fire that can be put out; but concentrating the squad into two groups would offer too many outflanking opportunities. And the tank arrives just too late to retrieve a position disastrous from the start. Still, everyone should drive a King Tiger once in their life, and in *UP FRONT* this formation is likely to be your only opportunity.

A better approach is to determine which of the armored units appearing in the game represents the best value for money for each nation. To a large extent, this must be a subjective decision (how frightened are you of becoming bogged, for example). Personally, I ignore everything except the unboxed Effect Number; the tank's prime targets are likely to be of high morale and hiding in -2 or -3 TEM buildings, and therefore difficult to shift. If the tank is to win the game for you, it is essential that it have a very high capability against infantry. Good crosscountry performance is worthless if its fire then has no effect. By this standard of reckoning, the best AFVs are:

	Vehicle	Effect	Cost	Cost/Effect
German:	#39 StuG IIIB	4	361	90.25
French:	#34 Char B1-b	4	315	78.75
Russian:	#38 SU-85	5	372	74.4
American:	#39 M8 HMC	4	296	74.6
Japanese:	#35 Type I SP	4	269	67.25
British:	#42 Sexton	5	329	65.8
Italian	#34 Semovente	4	223	55.75

This chart shows the Germans at a distinct disadvantage. The most economical AFV proves to be the British Sexton: a truly amazing vehicle, consisting of a 25-pdr field gun mounted on the chassis of an M4 Sherman. (The Italian Semovente cannot really be compared with the others, suffering as it does from staggeringly dreadful morale and an unbelievable 9.9% chance of malfunction.) Perhaps the surprise, though, is the high ranking enjoyed by the Japanese; the cheap Type 1 SP is almost identical to the Sexton in terms of value for money, though its lack of a machinegun is irritating. Bearing in mind Imperial Japan's disdain for armored warfare, this does seem rather unrealistic.

For those who want a quick game, I recommend this hand:

British:

Group A:		
#42 Sexton		329
Group B:		
#23 Watney	Mortar:	54
#21 Sgt O'Neill	MP:	46
Group C:		
#9 Bell	Rifle:	10
#10 Moon	Rifle:	10
#12 Gilfallin	Bren:	46
#7 Cleary	Rifle:	5
Total: 500 (at start 500)		

This puts the brilliant Sexton straight into action, hopefully well away from the panzerschreck which would normally be placed in Group C. Usually the provision of a mortar is merely to permit unusable Fire cards to be burnt rather than discarded. But here it plays a more important role: killing troops pinned by the Sexton before the opponent has a chance to rally them. Since it may have to come forward to provide this duty effectively, the squad leader accompanies the mortarman in order to lay down smoke.

When I said that this hand guarantees a quick win, I was careful not to say it guarantees you a quick victory! Weighted against the strength of the Sexton must be the simple lack of British numbers, the low morale of Group C (oh for a British commissar), the lack of an ASL, and the vulnerability of the SL to snipers. If the Sexton becomes bogged or otherwise incapacitated, a few good shots against Group C are likely to result in a rapid British defeat. Using this hand, I have both won and lost spectacularly, but I have never played through all four decks!

Thanks, of course, are not everything. *UP FRONT* is an infantry game, and with 501 points to spend, some interesting combinations of infantry weapons are possible. Let's look in detail at five of the heavier weapons.

MEDIUM MACHINEGUNS

At 129 points, the German medium MG is the most expensive in the game. It is also the most powerful, with an extra point of firepower at all ranges over its American and British rivals. But the three cards #10 Wolff (rifle), #12 Griess (LMG) and #15 Volke (assault rifle) cost only 117 points and put out much the same amount of firepower. I do not find the German MMG a particularly attractive purchase in comparison with the excellent MG34 LMG.

The American and British MMGs are virtually identical, and are priced at 115 and 114 points respectively. I like PFC Nixon with his Browning .30-cal. The American BAR is not an attractive weapon, being only two FP stronger than a rifle and being restricted by Rule 46.4, so the MMG is a good purchase in any DYO scenario. Likewise, PFC Palmer with the British Vickers MMG goes some way to compensate for the Bren gunners Gilfallin and Scarborough (for the last sentence of Rule 46.4).

The Russian and Japanese MMGs are, at 69 and 74 points respectively, good value. The Russians have a unique problem in that their morale 4 LMG is also an ASL; this is not always desirable. The alternative LMG (#28) has a morale of "3", a little low for such a crucial weapon in my opinion. I often choose #16 Cpl Semenov and his MMG, but usually because I don't want another ASL. (I like to put the commissar in

charge of the firebase.) The Japanese also suffer from a LMG identical to the Bren. At only 168% of the price of their LMG, the MMG is an economical purchase even though it does require two men to move it (well, how often does a MMG get moved anyway).

The Italians and French are in much the same quandary as the British: while the firepower of their MMGs is the weakest in the game system, their LMGs are one-man weapons also constrained by Rule 46.4. Both the Italian and French LMGs are almost identical to the British Bren. This means that while the Italian MMG (at 52 points) is not particularly attractive, the alternative of a LMG (at 30 or 33 points) is an even less pleasant proposition. For the French, the decision is even simpler—always choose the MMG (at 92 points) and never touch a LMG if you can help it because the MMG is much easier to repair and less likely to be removed following a malfunction. This is an important consideration in a four-deck game.

Of course, in deciding whether or not to purchase a MMG, it is not just a question of comparing firepower at Relative Range 3 (in my opinion, the most crucial range). Unlike all other infantry weapons, the MMG's most important characteristic is its long reach. Even at Range 0, it can put out a very reasonable amount of fire, typically two or three times that of an LMG. Whether or not it does succeed in pinning the opponent to his baseline, its presence will most certainly force him to play more conservatively right from the start, giving you the chance to seize the middle ground first. For this reason, I find the medium machinegun has a value beyond its raw points.

MORTARS

The *UP FRONT* mortar is a strange bird, and it takes some skill to use it well. Its principal purpose is to burn up Fire cards that are unusable elsewhere. It has tremendous nuisance value, as you will soon find out if your opponent uses one against you. You will find it firing at you with repetitive regularity all through the game, on most occasions achieving nothing but then suddenly wiping out an entire group!

The reason that its performance is so difficult to predict is that the RNC drawn to determine if a hit is achieved is added to swell the Effect Number. At Relative Range 3, most crewed mortars will hit an Acquired Target on any color RNC from zero to four inclusive. That means there is a 27.2% chance of attacking with FP2, 22.2% chance of FP3, 17.3% chance of FP4, 13.6% chance of FP5, and 9.9% chance of FP6 (plus, of course, a 9.8% chance of missing entirely). Nobody loses much sleep over a "2" attack, but suffering a FP6 attack could easily lose you the game in less than a minute.

But the real killer with mortar fire (and, in fact, ordnance fire in general) is that any Concealed card must be played *before* the Fire strength of the attack is known. I find this the toughest decision in the game system—whether or not to use a Concealed card to reduce the To Hit number. And a wise mortarman can use this uncertainty to great effect, expending a useless Fire card to finesse his opponent's best Concealed card immediately before the main attack from his buddies in the next group goes in. Little wonder that I find being subjected to persistent mortar fire easily the most nerve-wracking event in *UP FRONT*.

Fortunately for those who suffer, the mortar also has tremendous weaknesses. Foremost amongst these is its propensity to break down: 5% every single time it fires! I am uncertain what this high likelihood of breakdown is supposed to represent; historically, the mortar was (and is) a highly reliable weapon, with an absolute minimum of moving parts. (Easily the most unreliable weapon in the war was the dreadful British Sten, a weapon cobbled together in the dark days of 1940 and with an alarming propensity for jamming at the most critical moments; yet in *BANZAI* it is no more likely to malfunction than a trustworthy Lee-Enfield bolt-action rifle!) Malfunction of a mortar I therefore interpret to represent a temporary lack of ammunition, for the great handicap of the mortar as an infantry weapon is the weight of ammunition that must be carried if it is to make a significant

contribution to any battle.

Another limitation of a mortar is its minimum range; often the best response to a mortar is to advance and attack it! Another problem, of all ordnance, is that it is largely ineffective when fired at moving targets. The mortar's ability to "undo" the defensive benefits of woods is of no significance in a City Fight scenario, while its inability to fire from (VP-generating) buildings is a severe limitation. All these tend to mitigate the effects of a truly remarkable weapon.

But, is it worth buying? At 60 points, the German mortar is expensive. It does have the advantage of long maximum range and short minimum range, but the excellent German discard capability means that a mortar is not so important as a means of expending unusable Fire cards.

On the other hand, at 61 points each, the American and French 60mm mortars are a very good value. The Americans (and even more so the French) are troubled by their discard capability, and these mortars are also the only ones in the game with an initial Effect Number of "3" (increasing the likelihood of any particular final FP by as much as 5% in most cases). The French have the choice of a second, weaker mortar at 42 points; but I find it only rarely useful.

The British mortar cannot be recommended. Sadly, PFC Watney remains unpicked and unloved throughout most 501 City-Fight-in-Four encounters. At 54 points, the weapon is only slightly cheaper than that of the German, and yet its range is significantly shorter. Its uncrewed performance is execrable.

Particularly strange is the Japanese mortar . . . or mortars, for there are three of them! Why so many of them are offered is difficult to understand; I have seen one game in which a player placed two mortars in the same group, but his purpose in so doing remains undivined. Each of the three mortars has a different morale: "4" (costing 54 points), "3" (costing 41) and "2" (costing 27). The great weakness of the Japanese mortar is the reduction in its Effect Number at Relative Ranges of "2" and "3", just where the likelihood of a hit is at maximum. It can be intensely frustrating to watch your opponent extricate himself out from under your mortar barrage by calmly advancing to Relative Range 2! Still, at a cost of only 27 points, I do consider the Morale 2 mortar a good value, given the Japanese player's discard constraints. Mortars spend most of the game under cover in gullies anyway, so the low morale is no problem.

As usual, the poor old Italians are saddled with the worst mortar in the game—a laughable peashooter with a miserable Effect Number of "1". But given the Italian player's four-card hand and discard constraints, even this pathetic little joke of a weapon may be worth its 35-point cost as a means of burning unusable Fire cards. At least it malfunctions no more frequently than anyone else's mortar.

Easily the best mortar is the Russian's. At only 33 points, it is extraordinarily good value for the money. It is rare for me to play the Russians in 501 without a mortar. Firstly, the Soviet four-card hand and discard constraint make the Russians particularly susceptible to a logjam of one or two unusable Fire cards. Secondly, it is common for the Soviets to set up in only two or three groups, but this does make them vulnerable to natural outflanking; creating an extra two-man mortar group and designating it Group A widens the front without weakening the squad as a whole. The Russian mortar is comparable to the German except at extreme range, where a hit is unlikely. Its major disadvantage is its minimum range of "3". Even so, at almost half the price of the German mortar, it is a very good purchase.

Before leaving the topic of mortars, their deployment is worth discussing. I favor a mortar in Group A, the firebase in Group B and the maneuver element in Group C. But there is one other place well-suited for the mortar: amongst the reinforcements. It is poor practice to bring on riflemen after the end of the second deck as they are unlikely to be able to advance far enough before the end of the game to generate significant victory points. For this reason, if infantry reinforcements are to be brought on late, they should be intended as an additional fire-base rather than as a

maneuver group. A MMG makes a good late reinforcement, and so too does a mortar. A Russian mortarman and assistant can be brought into the game at the start of the last deck for less than ten points, and at this stage of the game may be able to go straight into action at Relative Range of "2" or "3".

ARTILLERY

I have noticed that off-board artillery is unpopular with players; yet in this scenario I consider it a valuable asset. Yes, it is exceedingly luck-dependent, requiring both a rare Radio card and a black RNC. But it can swing the game in your favor when a moment before all seemed lost. And while your radio is functioning, however disorganized your groups may be with critical personnel pinned or eliminated, your opponent will never advance without utmost caution.

If you are going to buy artillery, do it properly and purchase FP7 artillery. Your target will likely be hiding in -3 buildings and have high morale, so anything less than "7" is a waste of time and points. Nation by nation, the percentage of cards and costs are:

	Number	Percent	Cost	Cost/Card
German	6	3.70%	126	21.00
British:	6	3.70%	126	21.00
French	6(3)	3.70%(1.85)	126 (63)	21.00
America	8	4.94%	150	18.75
Russian	4	2.47%	66	16.50
Japanese:	4	2.47%	66 (66)	16.50
Italian	4 (4)	2.47%	33 (66)	8.25 (16.50)

This chart shows that the offboard artillery is best value for the Italians, is good value for the Russians and Japanese, and poorest value for the Germans, British and French (parenthetical values are for rare troop types).

But the Americans have the most copious supply of Radio cards, twice the Soviet, Japanese or Italian allotment. Since it is perfectly possible for an entire game to pass without the Russians or Japanese or Italians to even secure the right to make a 50% gamble at calling down artillery fire, this in itself makes the American purchase of artillery just that little bit more attractive than statistics suggest. Also, the Americans can hoard one or two Radio cards, something the Russians, Japanese and Italians simply cannot afford to do with their hand limitations.

Note that Table 3c in *BANZAI* is incorrect in its allotment of Radio cards. And what on earth does Rule 44.2 mean? There is no Radio card useable by the Germans that is not also useable by the Americans, so the second half of Rule 44.2 is more easily expressed by limiting the British to German Radio cards. The reference to American radios is irrelevant.

DEMO CHARGES

At 50 points (for all nations), the demolition charge is overpriced. It is difficult to use, and once used is expended. The Russians, Japanese and Italians are better off spending up to 66 points on a seven-factor off-board artillery barrage; the demolition charge is attractive only to the Germans and British. But, having said that, I have seen a number of games won suddenly by the "losing" side through the judicious use of a demo charge. But then again, I have also had my precious demo charge rout out of the game in the very first deck!

FLAMETHROWERS

Easily my favorite weapon is the flamethrower. In fact, it was largely because I was dissatisfied with opportunities for this weapon in other scenarios that I set about designing 501 City-Fight-in-Four in the first place. The flamethrower is tailor-made for a City Fight, thanks to its most important asset: negation of the defender's terrain (Rule 22.1). Only by bringing forward your flamethrower can you hope to wrinkle that high-morale group out of those VP-generating -3 buildings as the last deck plays itself out.

When using a flamethrower as the only firing

weapon, you should plan to generate a Fire 5 attack. This should be sufficient to kill or pin a significant proportion of the target group, unless a -3 Concealed card is played. Also remember the other great asset of the flamethrower: moving fire is not halved so the weapon can get into action immediately after advancing from Relative Range 4.

Of course, the flamethrower also has major disadvantages. Prime amongst these is an alarming tendency to break down at just the most awkward moment. But a less obvious problem is its bulk, as portrayed by its reduced KIA values. Recently, a four-man group including a flamethrower suffered three casualties in the course of a game . . . each time the bearer of the flamethrower! The last man alive in the group refused to pick the dreadful thing up, believing it to be jinxed.

Do not make the mistake of imagining that the flamethrower is only an offensive weapon; in many ways it is more potent on the defense. If your maneuver element has succeeded in finding some buildings to hold well forward, it will be very difficult for your opponent to evict you in the face of the flamethrower.

As usual, the Soviet equipment proves to be good value for the points, and the British and American poor. At more than half the cost of a MMG, the Italian flamethrower is too expensive, even at 30 points. The German flamethrower costs the same as the British, but bearing in mind the higher costs of most German weapons at 72 points some players may consider it (relatively) quite a good purchase. However, easily the best value is the French flamethrower at a mere 34 points.

Special mention should be made of the five flamethrowing AFVs. The Russian T26S and the German PzKw II (Fl) are not particularly attractive purchases—being neither cheap nor well-armored. But the German PzKw III (Fl) carries sufficient armor to have a good chance of closing with the enemy. Also, alone of all the flamethrowers, the PzKw III (Fl) has an effect at Relative Range 4 as well as at 5. This can be particularly important if an AFV reinforcement entering as Group E is to have any influence on Group C. At this range, the flamethrower will probably only deliver a Fire 3 attack. But if the target is holed up in -3 buildings, to achieve the same result from any other weapon a Fire 6 attack would be needed, so it is not to be dismissed lightly.

By far the most interesting flamethrowers, though, are the weird British Wasp and Italian L3/Lf. The Wasp is appallingly vulnerable to even desultory fire, but at 152 points it is cheap enough to be considered expendable. The Italian vehicle is even more fun as it has a better chance of closing with the enemy (it is not open-topped) and at 120 points is a bargain. Amazingly, Rule 28.6 means that one of the best uses of these vehicles is in a European version of the Banzai charge: keep them on the baseline until the opponent seems short of Fire cards and then charge forward to Relative Range 5 without playing a single terrain card. Well, it's worth a try.

The presence of the Wasp and L3/Lf mean the British and Italian players are the only ones able to field two flamethrowers in a squad. This is a technical capability only; the resulting squad is so unbalanced it is hardly worth considering. I tried it for a laugh once . . . and didn't laugh very much.

THE BRITISH

The great strength of the 501 City-Fight-in-Four scenario is that it is now played in enough clubs to make it worthwhile recording favorite squads on paper and keeping them in a game box ready for further use. A visit to another club then becomes a fascinating conflict of doctrines, for I have found that different clubs develop different styles of play and favored deployments, reflecting small shifts in accent perceived by each. I will devote the rest of this article to describing a few of the squads with which I have fought this scenario (however, you should note that I do not claim to have won with all of them) detailing them nation by nation, starting with the British.

The Churchill is an excellent infantry-support tank,

well-armored and with a good punch. Unfortunately, it is also expensive. To bring it on during the third deck leaves only 235.5 points to deploy initially. The sparse hand described below concentrates on high morale for survivability and an MMG to keep the enemy at maximum range for as long as possible. It suffers from a simple lack of numbers and an extremely weak firebase; once the MMG is pinned, the enemy can advance with impunity. The anti-tank rifle is included solely to burn unwanted Fire cards. To win with this hand is extremely difficult, but if you manage to survive the first two decks covering on the baseline you will then be well rewarded.

British:

Group A:		
#26 Oldaker	ATR:	14
#21 Sgt O'Neill	MP:	46
Group B:		
#2 Cpl Barnard	Rifle:	40
#5 Hodge	Rifle:	20
#13 Palmer	MMG:	114
Deck 3:		
#39 Churchill	265.5(531x0.5)	
Total:	499.5 (at start 234)	

A more balanced and successful British hand, with everything up front, is described below. Because the flank of Group A cannot be turned, it will often contain the opponent's weakest personalities (typically little more than a mortar and an assistant). This hand seeks to exploit such weakness by placing the maneuver element in Group A, the firebase in Group B, and the anti-tank element in Group C. As usual, the maneuver element has the highest morale since to be effective it must close with the enemy. Note also the single rifleman accompanying the PIAT; with any other nation, I would select a machine pistol, but the British firepower bonus (Rule 44.3) *doubles* the number of Fire cards this single man can use at Relative Ranges of 1 and 2, offering exceptionally good value for the money.

British:

Group A:		
#17 Shannon	MP:	26
#15 Shaw	MP:	21
#3 Scarborough	Bren:	61
#1 Sgt Vasey	MP:	51
	demo charge	50
Group B:		
#4 Tresham	Rifle:	15
#9 Bell	Rifle:	10
#25 McNamara	Rifle:	10
#7 Cleary	Rifle:	5
#2 Cpl Barnard	Rifle:	40
#13 Palmer	MMG:	114
Group C:		
#6 Willis	Rifle:	15
#20 Coleman	Piat:	64
Deck 3:		
	sniper	17.5(35x0.5)
Total:	499.5 (at start 482)	

But the most successful British hand I have ever used is the one shown next. As you would expect from what I have written earlier, it brings the Sexton on at the start of the final deck. Delaying the armor that long is risky, but it does mean that there is more to spend on the opening squad. I am a player who always prefers quality to quantity, so the initial squad contains just nine men (some players lament the low firepower that results from a compact squad, but I am deeply suspicious of large squads fleshed out with low-morale characters whose disappearance can all too easily break the squad). It is not a warped sense of humor that puts Cpl Burns with the flamethrower; the ability of the ASL to call down smoke offers the flamethrower some cover if caught in poor terrain. Also note that when using ordnance to free your hand of high-value Fire cards, the antitank rifle should also be used in preference to the PIAT. The PIAT is just too vulnerable to a malfunction to risk unnecessarily.

British:

Group A:		
#22 Cpl Burns	MP:	36
#14 Vane	FT:	72
Group B:		
#26 Oldaker	ATR:	14
#4 Tresham	Rifle:	15
#13 Palmer	MMG:	114
Group C:		
#17 Shannon	MP:	26

#11 Davis Piat: 85
 #15 Shaw MP: 21
 #1 Sgt Vasey MP: 51
 Deck 4:
 #42 Sexton 65.8(329x0.2)
 Total: 499.8 (at start 434)

THE GERMANS

I very rarely play the Germans, because I find them the least challenging side, so I have only one hand to offer. I am always cautious about including extremely nervous individuals such as Beck (morale "1"). My rule of thumb is only include him if there is an even number of men in the squad. Then his inclusion does not weaken the squad since, with or without him, the breaking point remains the same (in this case, five men remaining). Of course, Hamblen is as weak as Beck but, constituting no threat to the enemy, he can expect to have a very peaceful game. His (and Posner's) sole purpose is to extend the front, and this pair should hide in a gully as soon as possible—even retreating behind the baseline if necessary.

Germans:

Group A:
 #18 Posner MP: 9
 #21 Hamblen MP: 5
 Group B:
 #4 Schumacker Rifle: 15
 #9 Streich Rifle: 13
 #24 Cpl Steiner MP: 36
 #12 Griess LMG: 72
 #8 Wollack Rifle: 8
 #7 Beck Rifle: 5
 Group C:
 #17 Hauptman MP: 23
 #26 Kubler AR: 30
 #15 Volke AR: 28
 #1 Sgt Diettinger MP: 51
 panzerfaust 25

Deck 3:
 #39 StuG III 180.5 (361 x0.5)
 Total: 500.5 (at start 320)

THE JAPANESE

If the Germans are uninteresting, the Japanese are fascinating. Their special problems and advantages are so different to all other combatants that Japanese squads are often of unique design. The most important Japanese advantage is that 75% break point; if nothing else, it means a player can safely fill a squad with more low-morale men than the opposition and thus, in a DYO scenario, achieve superior firepower for the same expenditure. The principal disadvantages are the very poor Panic values (they just will not get their heads down) and the lack of a bazooka. The anti-tank rifle compensates greatly, being the best in the game. It does actually hit its target quite regularly. And at Relative Ranges 3 or more, a hit once achieved does have a good chance of knocking out the enemy AFV (because of the strange Rule 30.6). At these ranges, a hit once achieved is likely to have an effect indistinguishable from a bazooka. The Japanese player should always purchase the ATR.

The Japanese infiltration advantage (Rule 45.13) and the availability of some men with very high morale makes the demolition charge (and even the anti-tank mine) an effective weapon. If all else fails, the ATM can even be placed by Banzai charge, although the -3 berserk DRM is crippling.

The hand described below is quite different from the others I have listed. While the mortar fills a conventional role, note that the firebase in Group B has no machinegun, poor firepower at long range being compensated for by good firepower at short range. Group C is the most interesting: the two fanatics Okimoto and Shoburo, unencumbered by low morale companions, can devote all their energies to placing the demo charge effectively. But most striking is the arrival of the main maneuver element as late as the second deck; with any other nation this would be a risky delay, but the ease with which the Japanese player can advance makes this an impressively sophisticated ploy that may even lead to natural outflanking.

Japanese:

sniper 35
 Group A:
 #10 Korata Rifle: 10

#24 Yoruba Mortar: 27
 Group B:
 #15 Isishi Rifle: 10
 #8 Sakai Rifle: 10
 #13 Fusano Rifle: 10
 #11 Yumani Rifle: 10
 #28 Oi ATR: 17
 #9 Fuchida Rifle: 7
 #12 Fujita Rifle: 7
 #26 Sakata Rifle: 7
 Group C:
 #20 Shoburo Rifle: 20
 #1 Sgt Okimoto Rifle: 45
 demo charge 50

Deck 2:
 #18 Ikado Rifle: 13.6(17x0.8)
 #7 Asanti Rifle: 10.4(13x0.8)
 #6 Fujiyama Rifle: 10.4(13x0.8)
 #4 Kobayashi Rifle: 13.6(17x0.8)
 anti-tank mine 5.6(7x0.8)
 #2 Cpl Togo Rifle: 29.6(37x0.8)
 Radio-5 17.6(22x0.8)

Deck 3:
 #35 Type 1 SP 134.5 (269x0.5)
 Total: 500.3 (at start 265)

Note that *DESERT WAR* clarifies and expands Rule 21.11. British and French squads have the American limitations; Japanese and Italians, the German. Radios are not anti-tank weapons, and therefore are not counted for the purposes of Rule 21.11.

Incidentally, contrary to the implications of Rule 46, the majority of the troops fighting the Japanese were from the U.S. Army—not the U.S. Marine Corps. I cannot think of a single city captured exclusively by Marines, and therefore such a troop type is not available in this scenario.

THE AMERICANS

One of the most surprising discoveries, which comes as something of a shock to patriotic American players of the game, is just how temperamental the American forces are. I count the Americans as one of the hardest sides to play well in a 501 scenario. The presence of many personalities with Panic levels two greater than their morale (instead of one) is a significant advantage. But, in this scenario, this is more than outweighed by the truly appalling American armor.

It is not the vehicles themselves which are the problem; it is the tendency of the crews to button-up at the first sign of trouble. With one exception, the tank crews all have morale levels of "4". The exception is the weak M20 Utility Car with a morale level of "3"! Every German, Japanese, British and Soviet tank in the game has a morale of "5". Arguably, buttoning-up is not such a terrible thing; the tank still functions, albeit less effectively, and is in no greater danger of being destroyed. Also, the American buttoned-up performance is the best of any nation. Where a low morale value is crippling is the case of an open-topped AFV. When these cards are flipped over, they become not buttoned-up but pinned, and therefore completely useless until a Rally 3 card or greater is played. Sadly, the two most attractive pieces of U.S. armor—the M8 HMC at 296 points and the M10 Wolverine at 327 points—are both open-topped and therefore of little real value. To get a tank that can deliver at least four unboxed Effect factors without any danger of a pin, players will have to spend 418 points on an M4 (75) Sherman or 422 points on an M24 Chaffee, with weaker armor but superlative cross-country performance. But, with cost/effect ratings of 104.5 and 105.5 respectively, these vehicles are the worst value of any nation even though their buttoned-up performance is truly outstanding.

The inescapable conclusion is that the Americans are better off in this scenario sticking to infantry-only squads. Once this unpalatable truth is recognized, players can concentrate on building a hand that takes full advantage of their strengths. And there are many such strengths for the Americans. As has already been pointed out, the American mortar is very good value for cost and, although the purchase of a radio seems at first sight not particularly exciting, the American six-card hand (generous enough to permit the player to hold a Radio card until a target of opportunity presents itself) makes off-board artillery that much more effective. The good MMG also makes up for the unspectacular BAR.

One minor irritant, however, is that there is only one American soldier (Pvt Coggins) with high morale and armed with a machine pistol. Once it has captured a forward building, the maneuver element of any squad will have to fight for its life to hold that building and will no doubt face repeated close-range assaults; therefore the group should consist of high-morale men equipped with machine pistols. That such men are not available to the American player is one more indication just how demanding playing the American side in this scenario is.

The American hand described below is a peculiar one. The two men in Group A serve no purpose but to insure the American position during the first deck does not become Unbalanced (Rule 15.6). The ten points used to purchase these wimps must be regarded as a loss-leader. The men must be kept out of the battle whatever happens, even using Retrograde Movement (Rule 5.31) if necessary.

Only the firebase (Group B), built around the MMG, is positioned initially. The American six-card hand means that the risk of bringing the maneuver element into the game as a reinforcement is just about reasonable; the extra points so generated are solely needed. But, of course, it means the five men of the firebase are going to be under a lot of pressure throughout the first deck. It takes guts to start a game with only seven men, two of whom are cowards, and with no anti-tank defenses—but the high cost of American personality cards leaves little alternative. Actually, the firebase is a little more sturdy than first impressions suggest, for four of the five personalities enjoy Panic levels two higher than their morale ratings, so that although the group may be pinned frequently, the enemy will have considerable difficulty killing them (two Panic "6", two Panic "5" and one Panic "3").

As always, the maneuver element (whose mission is to capture and hold forward buildings and so generate victory points) is small but elite: four men with morale not less than "4". In this group is the anti-tank weapon (the better of the two bazookas) and the main offensive weapon: an Effect "7" radio. Bringing up the rear is a two-man mortar group. Note that the SL enters as a reinforcement; until then Cpl. Hull must act as SL. The strategy in the second half of the game is simple. Save a Radio card until a Fire card is drawn. Hit the most vulnerable enemy group with a "7" artillery barrage, and then try to panic the pinned men in that group with a second attack from either the MMG or the mortar (depending on the value of the Fire card).

Americans:

Group A:
 #24 Crain MP: 5
 #6 Smith SAR: 5
 Group B:
 #4 McElroy SAR: 16
 #11 Greenwood SAR: 16
 #15 Nixon MMG: 115
 #20 Cpl Hull SAR: 42
 #8 Burke SAR: 9
 Deck 2:
 #9 Myers SAR: 19.2(24x0.8)
 #25 Coggins MP: 15.2(19x0.8)
 #14 Towle Bazooka: 59.2 (74x0.8)
 #18 Sgt Allen Carbine: 44(55x0.8)
 Radio-7 120 (150x0.8)
 Deck 3:
 #26 Degi MP: 4.5(9x0.5)
 #28 Shelley Mortar: 30.5 (61 x0.5)
 Total: 500.6 (at start 208)

THE RUSSIANS

But to my way of thinking, it is the Soviets who are the most entertaining side to play in this scenario. The limitation of the four-card hand can be quite terrifying, particularly when consecutive attacks leave a pinned group in poor terrain without a Concealed card. But the Russians enjoy quite substantial compensations; personality cards are cheap, Concealed cards are plentiful, the mortar is outstandingly good value for cost, and the MMG and off-board artillery and flamethrower are also impressive. The great weakness, of course, is lack of a good anti-tank weapon.

On a simple points-per-factor calculation, the best Soviet tank is the SU-85, delivering five unboxed Effect factors for 372 points (a cost/effect ratio of

74.4). It is also an extremely effective anti-tank weapon, but lacks a machinegun. Personally however, I prefer the T-28C. This funny-looking tank has an appalling cross-country performance and weak armor, but it does have a machinegun and can therefore overrun. With a cost/effect ratio of 85.25, it is a perfectly respectable purchase.

If you want the tank up front, the hand below is interesting and worth trying, though success with it is far from guaranteed. An ASL accompanies the flamethrower in order to lay down smoke to cover its advance. Opportunities for Aggressive Action victory points are slight, so this squad must concentrate on breaking the opponent to win.

Russians:

Group A:			
#41	T-28C		341
Group B:			
#23	Podgorny	MP:	17
#22	Igorisk	MP:	12
#7	Kristov	Rifle:	9
#5	Storchillo	Rifle:	9
#19	Comm Dottski	MP:	33
Group C:			
#17	Kirilenko	FT:	48
#21	Sgt Aliev	MP:	32
Total: 501 (at start 501)			

A more conventional approach is to bring the tank on in the middle of the game, as shown below. This particular hand is risky because the maneuver element does not arrive until the second deck, a luxury the Soviets cannot really afford. But it does generate an interesting game with a variety of options. Note the late arrival of the squad leader, and the comparative weakness of the mortar crew, who should seek a gully as soon as possible (those players of a nervous disposition may prefer to transfer an additional man from the firebase to the mortar crew).

Russians:

Group A:			
#25	Kornilev	MP:	8
#27	Symsilov	Mortar:	33
Group B:			
#5	Storchillo	ATR:	9
#18	Mihailoft	Rifle:	12
#14	Zayakov	Rifle:	6
#9	Nosenko	Rifle:	6
#10	Kvasnokov	Rifle:	4
#16	Semenov	MMG:	69
#19	Comm Dottski	MP:	33
Deck 2:			
#12	Vakuta	Rifle:	13.6(17x0.8)
#3	Petrovsky	Rifle:	12(15x0.8)
#8	Chernenko	Rifle:	12(15x0.8)
#17	Kirilenko	FT:	38.4(48x0.8)
#26	Sgt Zorin	MP:	34.4(43x0.8)
demo charge			
40(50x0.8)			
Deck 3:			
#41	T-28C		170.5 (341 x0.5)
Total: 500.9 (at start 180)			

When is 501 not 501? When it's 527.3! The most interesting (and successful) 501 City-Fight-in-Four hand I have left until now to describe: partisans. Their increased propensity to panic and the other disadvantages outlined in Rule 37.1 are more than compensated for by the DYO 5% discount (Rule 43.5). This increases the maximum permitted face value of the squad from 501 points to 527.3 points.

The special advantages partisans enjoy make them a delight to play. The extra factor of concealment (Rule 37.2) neatly cancels out the lowered Panic levels, while their ambush facility (Rule 37.5) is of tremendous importance. In a City Fight scenario there is only one useable woods card, so the partisan player will have to make do with entrenched brush. But even though men in such terrain are very vulnerable, the opportunity to boost an attack by three whole Fire strengths simply by playing a Concealed -3 card is a potential game-winner, effectively canceling out the -3 TEM of buildings. Add to these considerations the fact that partisans are permitted to use weapons as heavy as MMGs, flamethrowers and radios and marvelous opportunities become apparent.

Because partisans are permitted only one leader, it is wise not to risk the squad leader in the front line. Sgt. Zorin therefore hangs back with the mortar. The cowardly Pvt. Kvasnikov is placed with the mortar group merely to give Sgt. Zorin some protection from

snipers. An alternative is to use the Commissar as the SL and place him and the radio at the end of Group B; Knezevich and the ATMM can then be exchanged for a LMG, while Kvasnokov and Kristov changes places. The major weakness, of course, is the lack of any anti-tank weapon; the best protection is not to tell your opponent that he is facing partisans until after he has set up! (Both players must reveal the nations they are playing before personality cards are selected, but troop types and partisans do not have to be declared until after that side has set up.)

Partisans:

sniper		55
Group A:		
#10	Kvasnikov	Rifle: 4
#27	Symsilov	Mortar: 33
#26	Sgt Zorin	MP: 43
		Radio-7 66
Group B:		
#13	Zaharoff	Rifle 14
#15	Uihailoft	Rifle 10
#6	Soloviev	Rifle 10
#7	Kristov	Rifle 9
#5	Storchillo	Rifle 9
#14	Zayakov	Rifle 6
#18	Mihailoft	ATR 12
#4	Yastreboft	Rifle 12
#16	Semenov	MMG: 69
Group C:		
#8	Chernenko	Rifle: 15
#3	Petrovsky	Rifle: 15
#20	Knezevich	MP: 14
#23	Podgorny	MP: 17
		7
ATMM		
#22	Igorisk	MP: 12
#17	Kirilenko	FT: 48
#12	Vakuta	Rifle: 17
demo charge		50
Total: 527 (at start 527)		

One of the most interesting recent games found these partisans fighting the Japanese; we postulated the encounter to be occurring in China and to be involving CCP partisans.

THE ITALIANS

The Italians are a phenomenally difficult nation to play, and therefore offer a tremendous challenge to the *UP FRONT* enthusiast. They labor under the most appalling constraints: uniformly low morale, and panic levels at best identical to morale and at worst one level lower! In comparison, American troops typically enjoy panic levels two greater than morale.

What this means in practice is that once an Italian is pinned, he is almost certain to run away the next time anyone shoots at him. Worse, an Italian squad breaks once more than 40% casualties are taken.

Together, these two rules can swing a game against the Italian player in a matter of seconds. Therefore, rapid rallying is absolutely critical for success. But with a four-card hand (two discards if no action taken), there is no room to hoard Rally cards. Truly, it is a dire situation.

In compensation, Italian personalities are the cheapest in the game. But they are not that cheap, only a few points less than the stalwart Soviets. Also, although this means the Italian player can purchase an impressive firebase for very little outlay, I am not convinced that Morale "1" and "2" riflemen are ever likely to contribute anything other than to the breaking of their squad by precipitous flight. Their weapons have the same performance as Soviet and Japanese rifles; that is to say, they contribute nothing at all at Relative Range 1. Therefore, what tends to happen is that the Allied player remains at Relative Range 1 taking pot-shots at the Italian firebase, advancing closer only when a sizeable proportion is pinned or routed.

Worse, the critical weapons of any *UP FRONT* scenario—the LMGs and MMGs malfunction on a red "5" as well as "6" (a 5.0% instead of 1.9% chance). And because Rout values are very low, and the LMGs are not crew-served, you will find that these most important weapons have a tendency to leave the game along with their fleeing operators. This is why the flamethrower and LMGs are not good choices, while the crew-served MMG is.

Taking this liability to its ultimate extreme, the Italians also have the worst man in the whole game system. Pvt. Moselli costs just two points, but with a

Morale of "1" and Panic of "0", rout is automatic. Readers will no doubt agree with me that, at this price, Moselli is still far too expensive!

A major problem the Italians face is lack of a bazooka. Now, infantry guns generally are very poor value for the money; they are extremely difficult to move, cannot be concealed once used, and are no more accurate than comparable weapons mounted in AFVs. But in the case of the Italians, they are the only non-AFV anti-tank guns available (the Italians do not even have AT mines). I would therefore recommend the 47mm ATG. It also has the advantage of being Morale 5, making it tougher than most Italian personalities (though the lack of concealment means that, in practice, it is as vulnerable as a Morale 2 or 3 man).

The squad below places the maneuver element in Group C, ready to be supported by the reinforcement arriving in Group E. Group A holds the fire-base and Group B the anti-tank weapon. Players willing to risk the non-arrival of a hostile AFV may prefer to switch around Groups A and B. Note that the last sentence of Rule 46.4 prevents the two Italian LMGs appearing in the same group. I further rule that this restriction extends to the MMG; to do otherwise would be illogical. Also note that, like the Americans, the Italians have very few MPs in capable hands. This makes it necessary to bring forward a LMG if the maneuver element is to have any chance in a close-range exchange of fire.

Italians:

Group A:		
#28	Ritondo	ATR: 9
#4	Sarducci	Rifle: 10
#6	Abruzzi	Rifle: 9
#12	Pasini	Rifle: 9
#7	Marino	Rifle: 7
#11	Giorgio	Rifle: 7
#16	Natale	Rifle: 6
#27	Salvadori	MMG: 52
#22	Cpl Fario	MP: 31
Group B:		
#30	47mm ATG M35	IG: 142
Group C:		
#18	Giganti	Rifle: 10
#2	Cpl Antonio	Rifle: 32
#3	Capitano	LMG: 33
#21	Sgt Capone	MP: 39
#8	Paolini	Rifle: 12
		Radio-7 33

Deck 3:	
#32	L3/Lf FT 60(120x0.5)
Total: 501 (at start 441)	

Note that there are precisely 15 personalities in the main squad. The 40% break limit means the optimum size of any squad is eight, 10, 13, 15, 18 or 20 men; these are the points at which the limit jumps by one man.

For those who prefer everything at the start, the next squad configuration brings the powerful Semovente on at the very beginning. The rest of the squad consists of the highest-morale men able to work together in a single group (thus, #3 with his LMG cannot be picked because of Rule 46.4). The danger of surrender is most acute in small groups and so the infantrymen huddle together in a single nine-man pack while the Semovente shells the enemy into submission. That, at least, is the theory. Needless-to-say, it is not always successful; the Italians are particularly vulnerable to outflanking, and the Semovente has a truly appalling tendency to malfunction (9.9%).

Note that it is important to resist the temptation to place a tenth man, such as #13, in Group B as this would degrade the squad. The squad as constructed below purposely consists of optimum numbers of personality cards required to resist breaking; ten, raising to fifteen upon reinforcement. The Deck 4 reinforcements are spare points. Because these men have such poor morale, they should only be brought on if the initial squad is on the verge of breaking. With a mortar in the group, they may be able to contribute something at long range without risking themselves unduly. Remember that, unlike all the other nationalities, the Italians really do have to be careful about degrading the squad with weak personalities; never forget that there is no legal requirement that you bring on your reinforcements if you do not wish to.

Italians:

two snipers

Group A:		
#34 Semovente M41		223
Group B:		
#8 Paolini	Rifle:	12
#18 Giganti	Rifle:	10
#4 Sarducci	Rifle:	10
#12 Pasini	Rifle:	9
#6 Abruzzi	Rifle:	9
#28 Ritondo	Rifle:	9
#27 Salvadori	MMG:	52
#2 Cpl Antonio	Rifle:	32
#21 Sgt Capone	MP:	39
	Radio-7	33
Deck 4:		
#7 Marino	Rifle:	1.4(7x0.2)
#11 Giorgio	Rifle:	1.4(7x0.2)
#16 Natale	Rifle:	1.2 (6x0.2)
#13 Farinacci	Rifle:	1.4(7x0.2)
#25 Giovino	Mortar:	7(35x0.2)
Total: 500.4 (at start 488)		

All players tackling the Italian challenge ought to seriously consider selecting the Bersaglieri option (Rule 50.5). The Italian fondness for surrender is crippling and well worth the 15% surcharge to avoid, even though the radio (Rule 50.5) then becomes twice as expensive (though still a very good value compared with those of other nations). The Bersaglieri's use of German split-action cards miraculously converts the Italians from dithering wimps to Wehrmacht clones at around 75 % of the cost. (I consider a Morale 4/Panic 3 Italian such as #4 costing 11.5 points to be the equivalent of a Morale3/Panic 4 German such as #4 costing 15 points.) Of course, the Bersaglieri are still severely limited by the Italian four-card hand and discard constraint, which is why they enjoy this significant discount in cost. For Elite troops like the Bersaglieri, 501 becomes 435.6 City-Fight-in-Four.

Bersaglieri:

Group A:		
#32 L3/Lf FT		120
Group B:		
#8 Paolini	Rifle:	12
#2 Cpl Antonio	Rifle:	32
#18 Giganti	Rifle:	10
#3 Capitano	LMG:	33
#21 Sgt Capone	MP:	39
Group C:		
#30 47mm ATG M35	IG:	142
#19 Romano	Rifle:	3
Deck 4:		
#34 Semovente M41		44.6 (223x0.2)
Total: 435.6 (at start 391)		

This is a most interesting squad. The anti-tank gun is the firebase, with Group B the maneuver element. Although as usual the maneuver element lacks firepower even at close range, at least each member has a morale of not less than "4". Three of the men have an equivalent panic level. Released from the danger of mass surrender, this group is one of the few Italian maneuver elements that stands a chance of earning Aggressive Action victory points. The flamethrowing AFV is placed in Group A in the hopes of luring the bazooka or PIAT away from the reinforcing Semovente. The Semovente's tendency to malfunction is so great that it is not scheduled to appear until the final deck. At a cost of only 44.6 points, it can be classed as expendable; hopefully, it will land a few telling shots before being silenced by a jam, but in this squad it is not an essential component of the victory. Romano's sole purpose is to deflect the aim of the enemy sniper. His presence does not degrade the Italian squad; both seven- and eight-man squads do not break until reduced to four personality cards.

THE FRENCH

Some players believe that the French are even harder to play than the Italians. They have the worst discard capability of any nation (one card, and only in those turns in which no action is taken), no bazooka, no anti-tank mines, no machine pistols, and not even an anti-tank rifle! They are thus poorly equipped to enter a City Fight, and extremely vulnerable to a logjam of unusable cards.

But, unlike the Italians, they do have a six-card hand, personalities with reasonable morale, a cheap flamethrower, an outstanding 60mm mortar, and (in compensation for appalling armor) the best infantry gun in the game. If you take care to prepare a squad able to circumvent the discard constraint, I believe the

French will beat the Italians more often than not. The secret is always to include in your squad one piece of ordnance and one "drill group".

The use of ordnance is obvious (burning unusable Fire cards), but a *drill group*? This two-man low-morale group has one job, and one job only—to march back and forth at the baseline expending unwanted terrain and Movement cards (ever in the sideways mode). A squad with these two elements is freed to employ the limited French discard capability exclusively to remove Cover cards. And, of course, it goes without saying that you must never (*never, never*) deploy Reservists (Rule 51.4); to do so is nothing short of suicide.

A fairly conventional French squad is shown below, incorporating both elements: the ordnance is the outstanding 75mm Mle 19, and the drill group is in A costing a mere eight points. Eight men comprise the maneuver element (Group C); without machine pistols, the French cannot expect to advance to Relative Range 5 and must therefore try to score Aggressive Action VP by getting a large number of men a little way forward rather than ramming a small group down the very throat of the enemy. The flamethrower is for defense. Note that wherever possible, a French squad should always consist of an uneven number of personality cards (because of Rule 51.7).

French:

Group A:			
#19	Tardieu	Rifle:	4
#5	Corbeil	Rifle:	4
Group B:			
#30	75mm Mle 19	IG:	295
Group C:			
#20	Bernet	Rifle:	22
#7	Laforte	Rifle:	19
#17	Rochard	Rifle:	19
#4	Cassavant	Rifle:	15
#2	Cpl Dubois	Rifle:	35
#14	Montcalm	FT:	34
#21	Sgt Petrou	Rifle:	43
#6	Piccard	Rifle:	11
Total: 501 (at start 501)			

If you are desperate to play with French armor, then the Char BI-bis is the best of a bad lot. It still offers poor value for the cost though; the crucial 74mm gun fires with To Hit numbers one worse than those printed on the card and cannot fire from the safety of a hull-down position (Rule 51.6).

Are you a gambler? Are you willing to bet that your opponent will not bring on an AFV in his opening set-up? If so, the following intriguing configuration will delight you.

French:

two snipers		50
Group A:		
#19 Tardieu	Rifle:	4
#5 Corbeil	Rifle:	4
Group B:		
#22 Cpl Goreux	Rifle:	33
#26 Lasalle	Mortar:	61
Group C:		
#20 Bernet	Rifle:	22
#17 Rochard	Rifle:	19
#7 Laforte	Rifle:	19
#8 Decautaux	Rifle:	13
#14 Montcalm	FT:	34
#21 Sgt Petrou	Rifle:	43
Group D:		
#25 Sarte	Mortar:	42
#23 Barral	Rifle:	9
Deck 3:		
#30 75mm Mle 19	IG:	147.5 (295x0.5)
Total: 500.5 (at start 353)		

Tardieu and Corbeil form the mandatory drill team, while Group C is the maneuver element. It is, of course, the provision of the two mortars (in Groups B and D), instead of a conventional firebase established around a MMG, which makes this a truly remarkable squad. The 60mm mortar can be deadly; against an Acquired Target at Relative Range 3, it can conceivably mount a Fire 7 attack! Even the more likely Fire 4 attack, repeated often enough, will wear down the opposition by attrition. But it is the provision of the second mortar which will really make your opponent squirm; the first will draw out his best Concealed card, leaving his newly-pinned men vulnerable to panic as the second mortar opens up. And for the French player, the real delight is that his

mortars live on a diet of Fire cards that is omnivorous—a Fire card of any strength will do, so the provision of two mortars coincidentally also alleviates the French discard problem.

In general, I would strongly advise players never to attempt to introduce an infantry gun as a reinforcement; Groups E and Z tend to be rather far from the action, and moving an IG gun is a terrifying ordeal. The only exception to this advice is for the French player. The 75mm IG is a potential game-winner, but it is also extremely expensive (almost as much as an AFV). Bringing it on in Deck 3 halves the cost. Also, the generous six-card French hand means that the precious Flank Movement card can be saved through one or more decks so as to permit the IG to enter as per Rule 35.3. Hopefully, a terrain and a Concealed card will also be available at that time, permitting entry under a combination of Rules 35.3 and 35.4.

If the tank had yet to be invented, this would be a superlative squad. Unfortunately, the squad's complete lack of anti-tank protection through the whole of the first half of the game makes its selection a nerve-wracking gamble. Against the Italians it is a gamble worth taking; the Semovente can be relied upon to jam sooner or later. Against the Germans, it is probably too risky; the StuG IIIB is a popular choice and regularly begins play at the start. In that event, it is tempting to run up the white flag immediately. The French player's only hope is to force the assault gun to button up under mortar fire and/or kill the commander with a sniper.

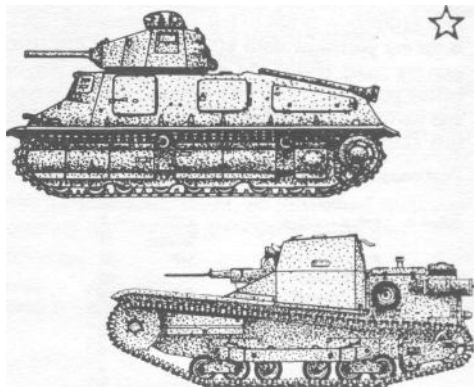
Finally, under no circumstance should a French player ever purchase #24 (Lebesque). Personalities #5 and #19 cost the same four points, yet have better panic levels. *Caveat emptor!*

CONCLUSIONS

I do not pretend that any of the preceding squad compositions are perfect. I have won with some more frequently than with others, but that may have as much to do with the style of play of my regular opponents as with any intrinsic worth. The purpose in describing in some detail these squads used in recent games is to stimulate readers to adapt them to reflect their own preferences. Should the flamethrower advance on its own, or should it be part of the maneuver group? How late dare you bring on your tank? Is an infantry gun of any real value at all? Different answers will come from different players.

But the real enjoyment comes from the universal nature of this DYO scenario. You can develop a "stable" of squads of different nationalities and carry them around, recorded on paper, in the game box. Pitting your favorite squad against that of a new acquaintance can highlight interesting strengths and weaknesses as the underlying assumptions upon which the squads were constructed are revealed. 501 City-Fight-in-Four has already become the single most popular *UP FRONT* scenario in England; I hope it enjoys similar success in the States.

Players have asked me why I chose a DYO value of 501 points for this scenario. When I was first toying with the idea, I developed an outstanding British squad totaling 501 points. But my target was the simple round number of 500, imagining it easier to remember. I spent several hours, becoming more and more bad-tempered, adjusting morale values here and there, exchanging rifles for Stens, swapping ASLs - in short doing everything imaginable to get this fine squad down to exactly 500 points. I failed. Then I said to myself, "What am I doing? This is *my* scenario; if I want it to be 501 points, then 501 points it will be!" So was born 501 City-Fight-in-Four. The final irony is that the piece of paper on which that perfect British squad was recorded has since been lost. . . and has never been seen again! And I can't remember all the details of the organization. If you find it, let me know.



DESERT WAR

Desert War is the latest expansion set for the popular *UP FRONT* system which provides a new environment and two new nationalities—the Italians and the French—for the game's fans. This unboxed module contains a rulebook, character cards, and counters. The inclusion of Range markers above "5" is bound to draw some praise simply because players can now avoid the need to combine multiple markers to keep track of groups moving at great distances. The only new rules sections cover the two new nationalities and the terrain alterations for simulating desert conditions. And the rulebook also carries charts for all seven nationalities detailing the Personality cards to be used in each scenario published in *UP FRONT and BANZAI*, something many aficionados have asked for in the past. With **Desert War**, *UP FRONT* has become, if not the greatest tactical wargame, certainly the most complete. It is available for \$10.00 direct from The Avalon Hill Game Company (4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214). Usual shipping/handling charges apply; Maryland residents please add 5 % state sales tax.