

Blitzkrieg Commander Playtest

One of our members, JimCornell, made some exclusive terrain boards for our BKC playtest, so we were excited to try this new system out. All of us except for Dave B. had played Warmaster before, so game explanation didn't take up too much time. After explaining the various command, shooting, artillery, and recon systems, we were ready to go.

The scenario's premise was the basic meeting engagement. It is set in late September of 1944 and a British force has broken through the main German lines and is racing ahead to seize a key village. The Germans have scraped together an armored kampfguppe and are moving to block the British advance.

The British force was broken up into three groups. The first was a mech infantry

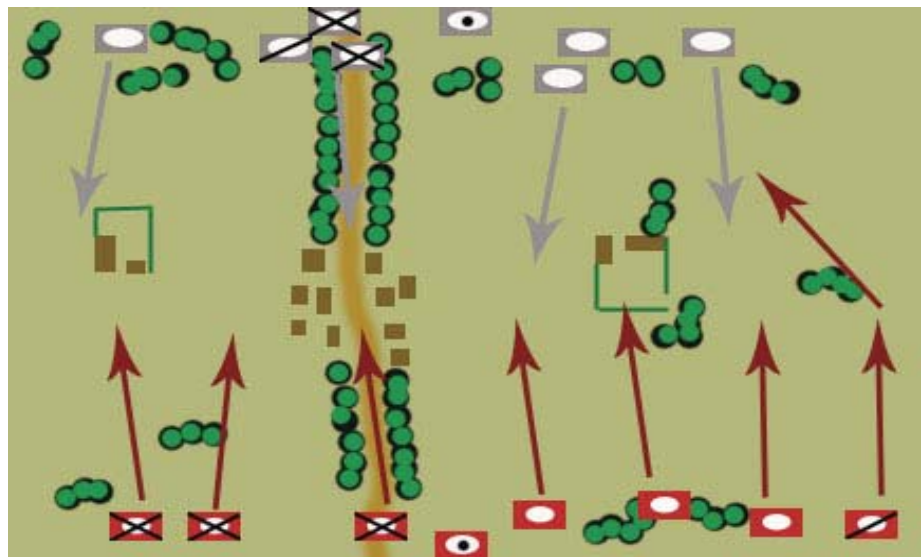
battalion of three companies plus anti-tank support. It would try to seize the village and a farm on the outskirts. The second group was an armored battalion of four squadrons of Shermans plus Fireflys that would try to keep the German armor busy. The final group was the recon, artillery, and overall command.

The British plan was to seize the village, dig in, and use the armor to provide flank support in the wide open spaces on the right of the village.

The Germans had a scratch force of two panzergrenadier companies, an anti-tank company of Hetzers, several armor

companies of Tiger IIs, Panthers, and Mk. IVHs, plus recon and artillery. The German plan was to quickly seize the village and have the armor cut in from their left to the village and destroy any Allied armor in the way. The anti-tank company along with other assets would hold the right against any attack on that flank.

With both side's forces set to go, all units were placed on the board and the Germans won the Initiative die roll and opted to go first. After a few final questions about units and rules, we were ready to try Blitzkrieg Commander for the first time.



The Battle Begins

The Germans had some successes and some failures on the first turn. The panzergrenadiers moved quickly and seized the outskirts of the village, but the supporting anti-tank units failed their command rolls. The rest of the Germans failed their command rolls as well, leaving the mech infantry exposed in the village.

The British responded by seizing the

other end of the village and both sides prepared for close combat. The British armor moved to establish blocking positions on the right, while the recon moved out far ahead of the main force.

Turn two saw the devastating power of artillery as the German guns caught a British mech infantry company in the open and pretty much wiped it out. The Germans moved some armor, but most

failed again due to bad die rolls.

Finally, on turn three the British armored engaged some of the further most German units, scoring a few hits and driving them back. The British brought up MGs and mortars into the village, setting up a defense against the expected German assault.

So far, the German armor had played a small role in the developing battle.

Blitzkrieg Commander Playtest (cont.)

The German armor finally passed some of its command rolls and began to advance. Unfortunately, they also failed right in front of a mass of Shermans. The British responded aggressively, knocking out two German armor units and setting up a firm base of fire support. The Fireflies maneuvered to get in better shots while protecting themselves by using the farm area as flank cover.

In the village the first firefights erupted as the Germans try to press the advantage they had in the outskirts. Both sides were now calling in



artillery fire and mortars on the village, but most of it kept scattering around the board, causing damage to everyone in the area!

The Germans were still having problems with their command rolls and could not coordinate an effective counterattack with their armor. They were scoring some hits, but the Shermans were definitely coming out ahead in this slugfest.

Back in the village the first German panzergrenadier platoon charged into the center of the village and in some deadly hand to hand combat, seizes the village center. All that is needed is for the German

armor to support the attack and victory belongs to the Germans!

The British respond by knocking out more German armor as the mass of Shermans delivers volley after volley into the German positions. In the village the second British mech infantry platoon counterattacks with mortar and artillery support, driving the German defenders back from the village center.

The Germans still have sizeable reserves, but can't get them to move. A few well placed armor units could ensure victory, but the bad die rolls continue on.

The British, meanwhile, prepare for the final push to end the game.



Finale and Conclusions

A virtual storm of fire engulfs the German positions inside the village. With the German armor threat on the right flank nullified, a detachment of Shermans joins the infantry in attacking the village. The first German panzergrenadier platoon is wiped out and the second is taking serious hits. Most of their halftracks are now on fire and things are looking grim for the Germans. A final turn with more bad command rolls

and the Germans are forced to withdraw.

Despite our doing a few things wrong, we had a great time! The game "felt right", in that you couldn't count on moving and sometimes a few units moved twice or three times, making both sides respond to new threats. Besides Command Decision 3, this is the closest I've seen to recreating operational level armored combat.

It also worked well with multiple players and I would say that it's ideal for group play. Once you get used to the system, each player can run things on his section of the tabletop without referring to the rules or charts.

Overall, we were impressed and several members are now going to start creating armies for the Russian Front. We look forward to playing this again.