

non-existent. Good luck holding out with the Ottomans. Your positive is the series of trench lines on the map. However, the Trench line on the far side of the map starts 45% of the way towards the north of the map already. Moreover, this is the costal from Jaffa to Haifa, so it's not hard to see where the obvious British Axis of Advance is aiming. The free set up is a bit awkwardly worded but this allows the Ottoman the opportunity to see how much better they can do - it can't be much worse.

The British goal is off course to integrate air, artillery bombardment and mobility to open a gap for the fast units to push through and allow the infantry to hammer the Turks. As many Turk garrisons can't move, they are sitting "furniture" but the fact remains, they need to be reduced or eliminated to garner victory points. With only ten game turns, the Brit must focus two turns ahead as to their moves and how to coordinate the slower elements coming up to attack. The British Player should always end up with a minor victory on victory points but since so few British units will be eliminated, this is essentially meaningless. But the British player should strive to capture all victory point towns. To secure an automatic major victory, you need to control every town. That's the fun part of the challenge here, trying to achieve that, which is why this makes such an excellent solitaire game.

The use of artillery for both players is essential but the British has overwhelming superiority in this arm. The Turks will use it mainly for defensive fire in support of their units. Wise use of the bombardment table for either set can set the other player back. This bombardment table is however generally deadly for the Turks. The more units that are in a hex, the greater the chance of an adverse result on the table. It's an ugly choice for the Turk, risk losses to artillery early on or have your defensive line blown apart due to not being really strong in any hex. In this campaign, the RAF hammered the retreating Ottomans, disrupting their ability to rally.

CONCLUSIONS

The game *AB* is historically unbalanced but rightfully so. But if we fairly examine that statement, aren't many game topics? To manipulate this campaign otherwise would require some incredible sleight of hand if not down right fudging by Schutze Games. Instead they delivered a game that feels historically right, is lovely to look at and plays with few hitches. It's an incredibly satisfying gaming experience, reminiscent of any desperate 1941 Soviet struggle to hold back the onrushing Panzers and might of the Third Reich. Game play is smooth and fast, allowing for it to be played back to back, comparing how your game play fared vs. that of your opponent's. *AB* is hard to find and perhaps an obscure title but it's a game I'll keep. ♦

Master and Commander

White Dog Games

Designer: Michael W. Kennedy

Reviewer: Robert G. Smith

When the White Dog Games email hit my inbox advertising *Von Moltke's Triumph*, I was excited. But then I saw *Master and Commander (M&C)*. All thoughts of Von Moltke the elder disappeared. *M&C* is perhaps Miss Katie's favorite movie, so with that I asked Michael Kennedy about it. I had never got into any of the same themes games such as *Wooden Ships & Iron Men*. Never looked at them. Never played them. Never owned one. But considering Peter Schutze was involved with it, the last White Dog Game I got was such a blast, and I never had dipped my toes in this aspect of the gaming waters, I said why not? After playing a number of scenarios...I'm still happily afloat!

COMPONENTS

M&C comes in a thin attractive and sturdy bookcase style box. The cover states Quick Play Napoleonic Naval Combat, and they're right! Within the box you will find two counter sheets, one of the two opposing sides ships, rendered in either blue or green. They are quite attractive. In addition you have the other game markers that

add more flavor to the game such as coppered bottoms, Marines, crew quality and other aspects. The two maps are simply clear white hexes. I do wonder why they didn't chose to make them some shading of blue however? In addition, the edition I received was the American War of Independence Edition with over 20 pages worth of additional combat scenarios. I would strongly suggest purchasing that in conjunction with the game.

RULES

Fifteen minutes. I repeat fifteen minutes, that's all you will need to capture the essence of how to play. It's a lower end game as far as rules. The rules were clean enough that I had no questions whatsoever.

GAME PLAY

It was different for me to play this game for I hadn't a lot of experience to go with it. Sadly, I had my knowledge from watching the movie *Master & Commander* than any game experience. So I thought about it from the stand point of Jack Aubrey - what would Jack do? I came to the conclusion the first lesson is if I'm superior to the other ship or fleet stay away and if inferior, close to equalize the disparity. It should not have been, but it was a slight gaming revelation to me, truly putting myself in the way of a broadside (shudder).

Ships are rated from 1st to 6th. Think of the 1st being a dreadnought, as it has a firepower of 10 but it the slowest at a rate of between two to five. I was unaware of such a disparity in the value of these ships. The Fire Combat Table is pretty simple to use. It is the ship's rated firepower minus the distance to the target. The fire combat coverage illustration neatly defines and answers any possible questions. A hit leads to a step loss. Each turn you can fire from both the port and starboard side during your phasing or moving phase and then again when not phasing.

I came to realize that in a fleet action (the self generated scenarios) I would choose to

lead with a ship of lesser value. However, what was hardest for me to get was understanding the importance of the wind gauge and how to play it to your advantage. It costs 2 movement Points (MPs) to move into the wind, but only 1 to move with it or to move obliquely to the wind. I suspect you will not want a collision either, which means staying abreast of your movement points. It would seem to me if that event happens you would foul your entire line.

I then learned to analyze the strengths of the two sides in a fleet type action. Sheer numbers are often simply that. That's where the game's aspect of crew quality matters so much in terms of impacting game play. There are five different crew types, ranging from elite to the sum of the earth dragooned from somewhere poor, that possibly modify an individual ship's firepower and movement rate. That elite crew with a +1 modifier to both movement and firepower is a huge impact.

Often I look at scenarios in terms of their greater training value, what can you learn from it? The Battle of Lissa is one such scenario. Upon first glance, you have to wonder about inclusion of such a disparity of forces: three 5th rate veteran British ships and 16th rate and six French & Venetian 5th rate, with either poor or green

crews. It's simply a nightmare for the French Player because in order to win they must have the only ships on the map.

CONCLUSIONS

Light, fluffy, fun and the type of addictive where you say, ah, you know, we have enough time to set up a bang out a smaller scenario. Lot of value here with *M&C* in terms of sheer number of solid scenarios and some very fun perhaps unbalanced ones. Surprisingly for such a "light" game, it captures and well reflects the key tangible lessons of that period. It's the first sea warfare game of this period of naval warfare I have played and I cannot think of any better introduction says this experienced gamer who now got his feet "wet". Recommended. ♦

