

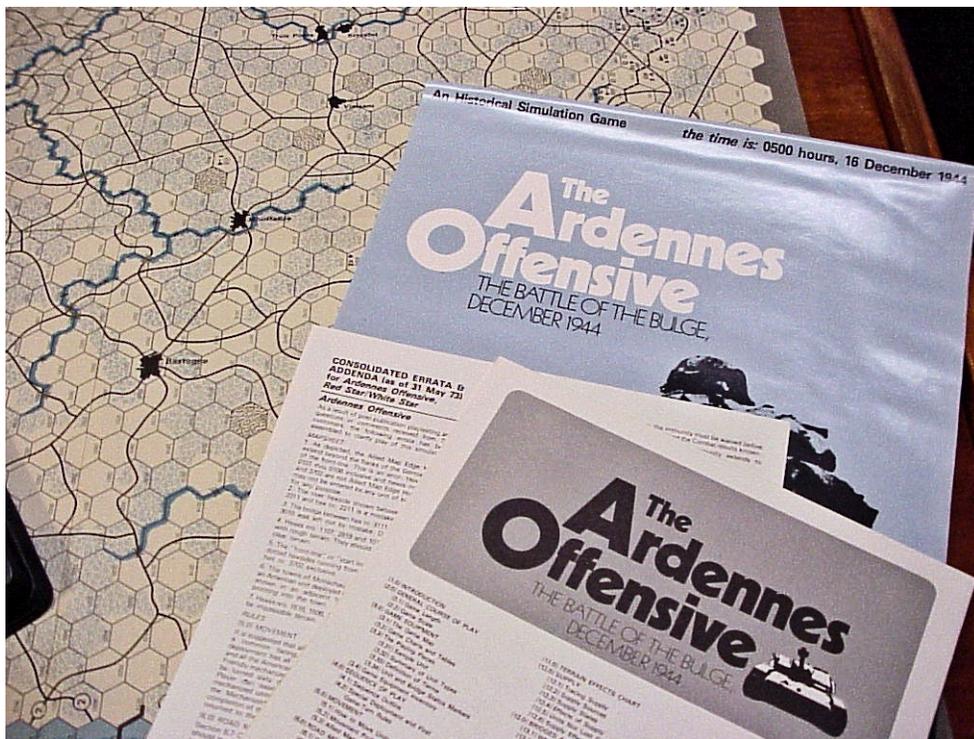
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# Revisiting SPI's *The Ardennes Offensive*

by Bruce Redenour

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## The Ardennes Offensive – SPI Publications



**Editor's Note:** Fifty years after its publication, *The Ardennes Offensive* gets another turn on the table under the masterful hands of Bruce Ridenour. He and his brother-in-law engaged in a day-long battle with this SPI classic and reports back from the front to remind us of what SPI games were like in their early years! Bruce is the originator and admin of the popular **SPI Games** site on Facebook. If you are not a member, you should be! --RHG

It is now Saturday afternoon of a three day weekend devoted to playing SPI games! We were able to start Friday morning at 10AM and play until 10PM! Not too bad for old guys!

First game up was **The Ardennes Offensive** from 1973. It took a while to get the ZOC, retreat, stacking and movement rules straight in our heads.

Basically a friendly unit negates enemy ZOCs in its hex for all purposes. This means that you can retreat into a hex with a friendly unit even if that unit is in an enemy ZOC! Also, using this rule, you can infiltrate an enemy line by moving a friendly unit out of a stack that is an enemy ZOC and move it directly into an adjacent hex

even if that hex is in the ZOC of the same unit that you were in the ZOC of!

Other sticky and unusual rules was the Stacking and Unstacking rules. Can't do both in the same turn. Also, you cannot move stacks of units. All units have to move individually! We found the stacking and unstacking rules frustrating and annoying. It really bogged down movement and combat!

**[Ed. Note:** As it did historically? Below is my overview of the rules for those interested, and Bruce's great play by play follows on page 7! – RHG]

**The Ardennes Offensive:** One of the early games to follow the **Kursk** concept of providing a second movement phase for mech units. The Turn Sequence for the Phasing player is crucial, as it allows players to break through and re-create the 'blitzkrieg' tactics to surround and eliminate the enemy rather than simply push them back. (But there is no second combat phase.)

**[12.3] SUPPLY STATES**  
 (G) Units are *unsupplied* when they are unable to trace a supply path.  
 (H) Units are *isolated* when they are unable to trace a supply path, are totally surrounded on all six adjacent hexes by Enemy units or Enemy controlled hexes *and* are more than three hexes from any Supplied Friendly unit.  
 (J) Units which are within three hexes of a road exit hexside on their respective map edges can never be isolated, even if cut off by terrain or Enemy presence.

**Sequence of Play: Phasing Player --**  
 Supply/Movement/Combat/Mech Movement.  
 As is expected, supply is a big issue in this game. If unsupplied at the start of their player turn, a unit's Attack strength is halved Fractions Round Up (FRU) – as is the Movement allowance (FRD).

At the moment of combat, the supply of the defending unit is evaluated. If he is *Isolated*, his Combat Strength is Halved FRU.

**Bridge Interdiction vs Supply and Movement:**

Any bridge within 3 hexes of an enemy unit is considered to be interdicted for the Friendly Movement and Supply. **Exception: Enemy Units in Road Mode do NOT cause Bridge interdiction!**

**Movement is normal except:**

Units pay a stacking cost to enter/leave a hex with a friendly unit. This prevents a unit from moving THROUGH a hex with a friendly unit! Stacking: 1 Division or three regiments/ brigades.

**Zones of Control are normal except:**

Friendly units negate Enemy ZOC, for all purposes. (Rule 7.2) Thus while units must end movement when they enter an Enemy ZOC, if a *stack* of units began in an enemy ZOC, if one unit remains in the original ZOC hex, others may leave – including entering another ZOC hex!

**Roads:**

Roads eliminate the need to pay the cost of other terrain in a hex, and units can use the road whether they are in Road Mode or not. But units in road mode have increased mobility – but decreased combat effectiveness.

**Road Mode:**

- Units must be on a road to enter road mode.
- Mech units pay 6 MP to enter or leave Road Mode. Non-Mech pay 3 MP.
- Mech units can enter into Road Mode, move and leave Road Mode in the initial movement phase – but can only do so in the Mech Phase if they have not engaged in Combat this turn.
- German units move 2 road hexes for each Movement point expended.

**[3.31] SAMPLE UNIT**

**[3.2] SUMMARY OF UNIT TYPES**  
 Unit type is used to determine the general classification of the unit (Mechanized or Non-Mechanized). These classifications are of major importance in the game.

Mechanized Units:	Non-Mechanized Units:
(A) Armor (Panzer) <b>6-12</b>	(A) Infantry (Panzer Grenadier) <b>4-4</b>
(B) Armored Infantry (Panzer Grenadier) <b>6-10</b>	(B) Paratroop <b>5-4</b>
(C) Assault Gun <b>2-10</b>	(C) Engineer <b>1-4</b>
(D) Motorized Paratroops <b>4-10</b>	

## [11.0] ARDENNES TERRAIN EFFECTS CHART

TYPE OF TERRAIN	MOVEMENT POINT (MP) COST TO ENTER OR CROSS	EFFECT ON COMBAT
 Clear hex	1 MP	None
 Ford hex-side	Mechanized units: 3 additional MPs to cross Non-Mechanized units: 1 additional MP to cross	None
 River hex-side	Mechanized units: 6 additional MPs to cross Non-Mechanized units: 3 additional MPs to cross	None
 Bridge hex-side	No additional cost for river hex-side (see Bridge rules)	None
 Rough Terrain hex	Mechanized units: 4 MPs Non-Mechanized units: 2 MPs	None
 Town hex	Same as other terrain in hex.	Ar & Dr Combat results have no effect on units in town hex
 Impassable hex	Entry prohibited	Not applicable
 West Wall hex	German units: No additional MPs. Allied units: 2 additional MPs. May not enter in Road Mode.	Defending German units in the hex tripled; doubled if attacking out of the hex; Ar & Dr results have no effect on German unit. Allied units do not receive any benefits.
 "Cleared" West Wall hex	no additional MPs	German units doubled on defense; Ar & Dr results have no effect on German unit. Allied units do not receive any benefits.
 Road hex	1 MP regardless of terrain. Units do not have to be in road mode for roads to negate terrain.	None
 Allied Map-Edge hex	Enter only by mandated retreat.	Prohibited

- Allied mech units also move 2 road hexes per movement point – but Allied non-mech can move up to 10 road hexes per movement point!
  - Units in Road Mode must remain on the road and cannot move through an interdicted bridge hex.
  - Units in Road Mode cannot stack – or be adjacent to another unit in Road Mode.
  - **If a retreat forces them to enter a hex with another friendly unit – they are eliminated instead.**
  - If it forces a Road Mode unit to end adjacent to another Road Mode unit, it must move to rectify this *in the next movement phase*.
  - **Units in Road Mode have no ZOC except for the hex they occupy.**
  - **Units in Road Mode have their Combat strength halved – fractions Round Up.**
- If a unit in Road Mode is attacked or engages in combat, it must LEAVE Road Mode at the START of its NEXT Initial Movement Phase. If this unit does not have the Movement Points necessary to make a required conversion out of Road Mode – it is eliminated!

*Don't overlook that there is some errata on the map, and on the scenarios. [LINK](#)*

**From Game turn 6 on**, the Germans have to roll each turn from now on to see if they will get to continue attacking with the special German combat results table. This table is far more bloody, and that is important for the Germans in terms of gaining victory points.

**[10.3] GERMAN INITIAL COMBAT RESULTS TABLE**

The German Player uses the German Initial Combat Results Table from Game-Turn 1 to Game-Turn 5. At the beginning of Game-Turn 6, the German Player rolls the die. If he rolls a "1" he commences using the Standard Combat Results Table. Any other result and he continues to use the Initial Table. On every Game-Turn thereafter, the German Player repeats the die roll until he rolls a "1" when he switches to the Standard Table.

The German, with this extra emphasis on an all out attack, has a goal – If they can score 35 VPs in the first 6 Game Turns, they win and Immediate victory!

**[16.2] GERMAN IMMEDIATE VICTORY**

If the German Player scores 35 Victory Points by the end of Game-Turn 6, he wins an immediate victory and the Game ends.

**[16.3] ALLIED CUMULATIVE VICTORY**

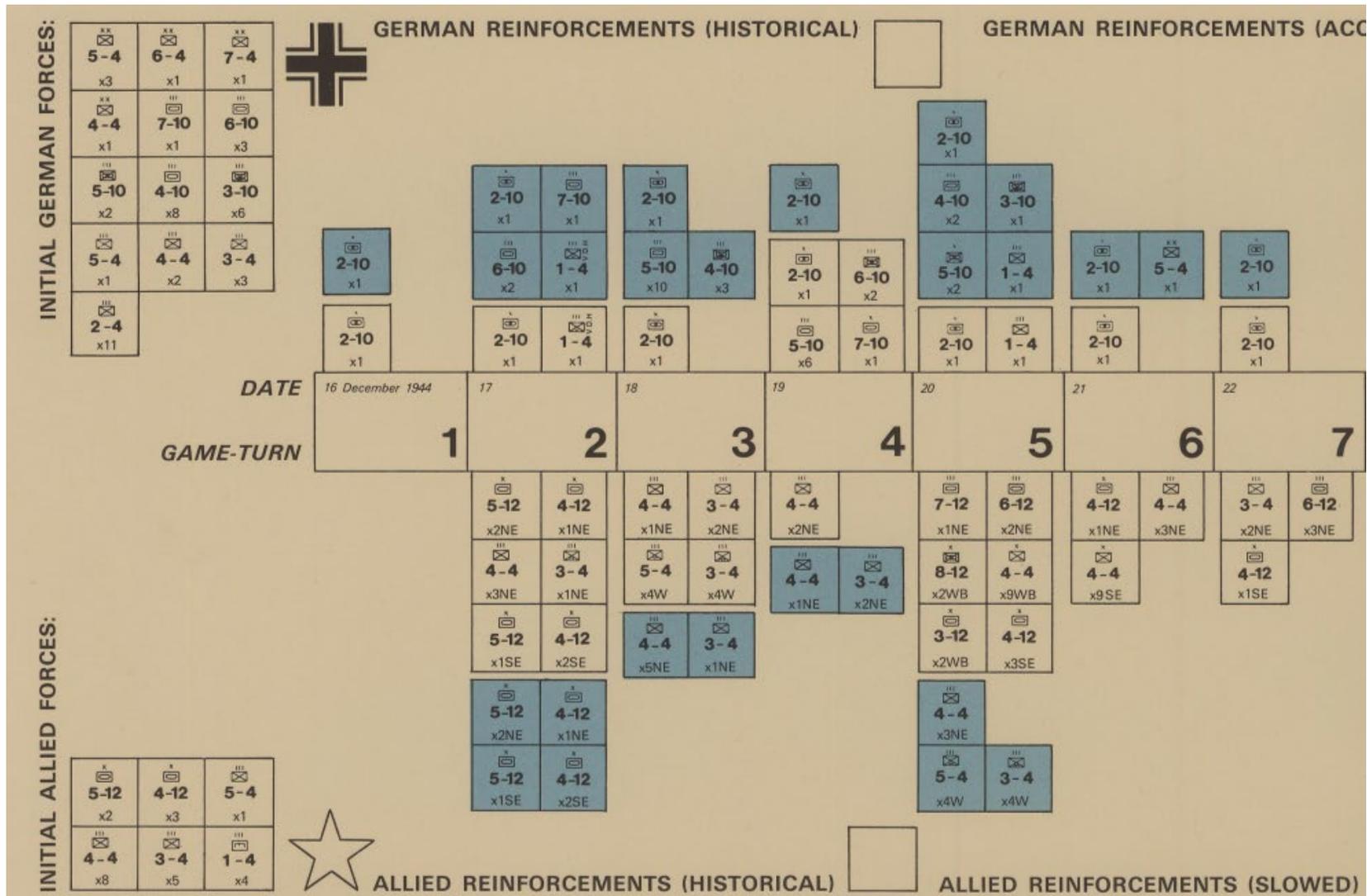
If the German Player scores less than 35 Victory Points by the end of Game-Turn 18, the Allied Player wins regardless of the Victory Points Ratio.

**[10.0] ARDENNES COMBAT RESULTS TABLE**

Odds less than 1-2 are treated as 1-2.  
Odds greater than 9-1 are treated as 9-1.

GERMAN INITIAL COMBAT RESULTS TABLE											
<i>COMBAT ODDS (Attacking Strength to Defending Strength)</i>											
Die Roll	1-2	1-1	2-1	3-1	4-1	5-1	6-1	7-1	8-1	9-1	Die Roll
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2	Ar1	Dr1	Dr1	Dr2	Ex	Ex	Ex	De	De	De	2
3	Ar1	Dr1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr3	Dr3	Ex	De	De	De	3
4	Ar2	Ar1	Dr1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr3	Dr3	Ex	De	De	4
5	Ar2	Ar2	Dr1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr2	Dr3	Dr3	Ex	De	5
6	Ar2	Ar2	Dr1	Dr1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr3	Dr3	Ex	De	6

STANDARD COMBAT RESULTS TABLE											
<i>COMBAT ODDS (Attacking Strength to Defending Strength)</i>											
Die Roll	1-2	1-1	2-1	3-1	4-1	5-1	6-1	7-1	8-1	9-1	Die Roll
1	Ar1	Dr1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr3	Ex	Ex	Ex	De	De	1
2	Ar2	Dr1	Dr1	Dr1	Dr3	Dr3	Ex	Ex	Ex	De	2
3	Ar2	Ar1	Dr1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr2	Dr3	Ex	Ex	De	3
4	Ar3	Ar2	Ar1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr2	Dr2	Dr3	Ex	De	4
5	Ar3	Ar2	Ar2	Ar1	Dr2	Dr2	Dr2	Dr3	Dr3	Ex	5
6	Ar3	Ar3	Ar2	Ar1	Dr1	Dr1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr3	Ex	6



### HOW TO USE THE TURN RECORD/ REINFORCEMENT TRACK

In the Initial Forces Charts (to the left) and the Turn Record/Reinforcement Track, the units to be received are indicated by their pictures. Under each unit picture is a multiplier-number (for example: "x3"). This indicates how many of that type of unit the Player receives. In addition, on the Allied side of the track, this multiplier is followed by a map-edge code corresponding to those found on the mapsheet itself.

This code indicates the map-edge on which the unit is to appear. German reinforcements have no code since they all appear on the east edge. Reinforcements coded in blue are those to be used in the adjusted-reinforcement-rate scenarios. Untinted units are the historical reinforcements. Players should set up their counters directly on this chart where the pictures appear and, as the Game Turn marker moves into the box indicating the appropriate Game-Turn, bring them into play according to the rules.

***Ignore units in blue tint for this scenario.***

***All this AND a German Paradrop!  
What a game! -- RHG***



## Set Up

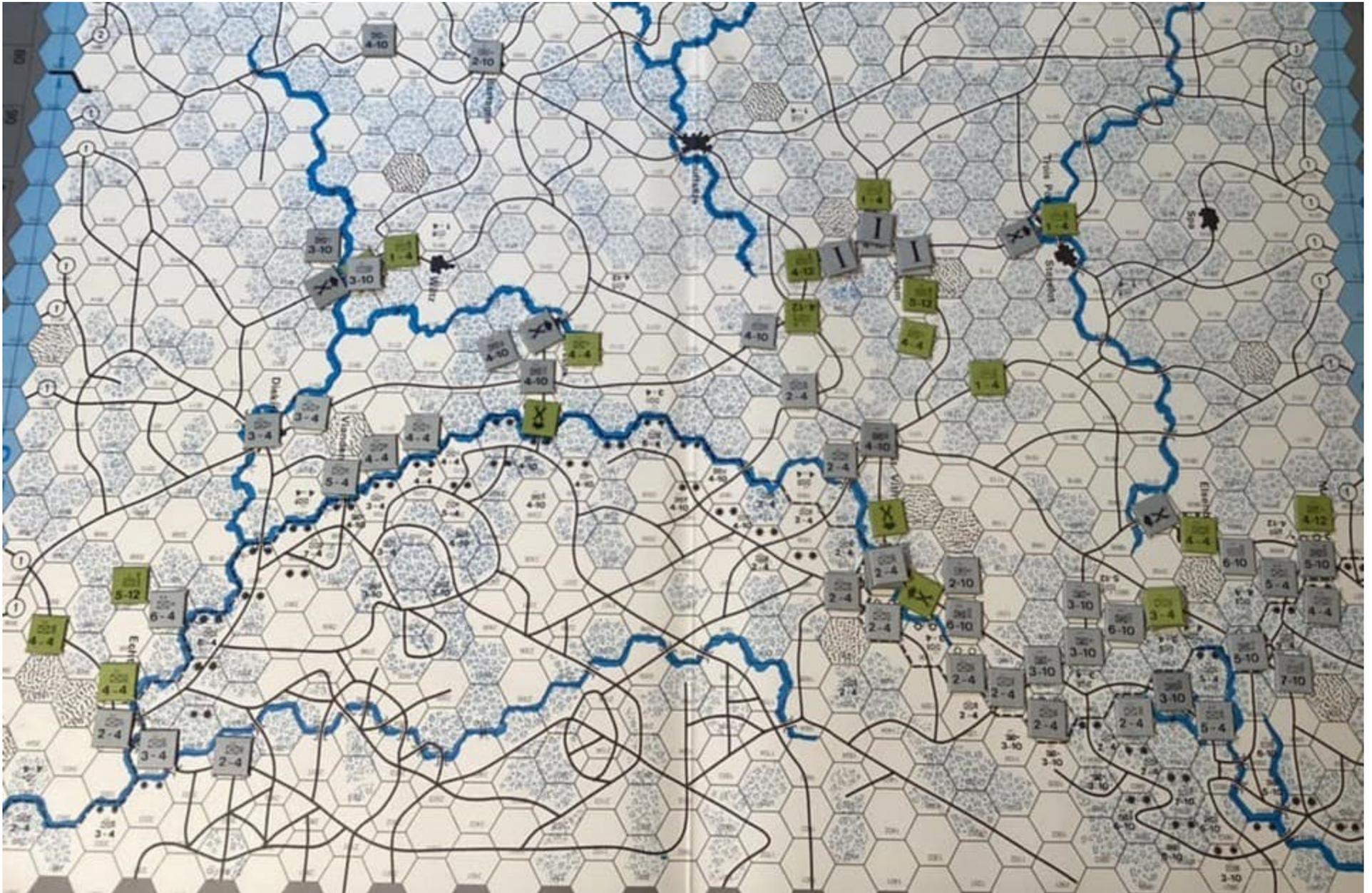


The initial set up of units. On the first turn, the German loses his first movement phase and has to attack every US unit that he is adjacent. Also every German adjacent to an Allied unit has to attack. Also every German adjacent to an Allied unit has to attack. The Germans get to triple their strength on each attack simulating the initial German artillery barrages.

**End of the First Game Turn:** In the NE, the US has lost a unit and others had to retreat. In the middle and in the SE part of the line, the Germans eliminated two Allied units resulting in huge holes in the Allied line. The Germans used their second mechanized movement phase to advance two Panzer divisions up the roads to Bastogne and the two towns east of Bastogne



The situation at the end of the German player GT2: Note how in their part of GT1, the Americans rushed their armor west to neutralize and isolate the Panzer division. Unfortunately, note that the German player occupies Bastogne!!



End of GT 2. The Germans have pretty much mopped up the remaining US units in the NE. The only good thing is that the US player skillfully disengaged all the US armor and the higher-strength infantry units and headed west, leaving a minimum of units to cover the retreat. Note that the US really has those two Panzer divisions in a bind. One is isolated and the other looks about to lose big in the Bastogne area. The Americans entered in Road Mode.



**GT3.** The Germans have mopped up all the remaining American units and are now moving quickly west. The Americans are desperately trying to move east in form some kind of defensive line to prevent the Germans from completely taking control of the game. The Germans get to use their own special combat results table, so they can pretty much eliminate units easily. The Americans have re-captured Bastogne, but due to the difficulty of coming out of road mode in an efficient manner to be able to put the units in the combat quickly, the isolated panzer division in the north east looks like it will get reinforcements and be saved by the fast moving Germans. Also, as a result of this several American units look doomed because they are going to get crushed in between the isolated Germans and the other Germans heading west



German GT 4. Not good for the Americans! Many units destroyed. Most of the units attempting to attack the western most panzer division have been eliminated. The German army is a juggernaut! Looks like a cakewalk into Bastogne! On GT4, the Germans receive massive reinforcements. They can be seen in the picture using road mode and head west as fast as possible.



**American GT 4.** The US is in desperate need of reinforcements! However, the reinforcements due in GT 5 have to enter in road mode and it will be several game turns in order to get them deployed and useful for combat! However, the American player has done an extremely efficient job creating a cohesive combat line. It isn't perfect. It is weak and in the next few turns will experience horrible attrition from the Germans.



**German GT 5.** The Germans don't let up. Notice the American line is missing a bunch of units since last turn! The American's right and left flanks looks doomed!



**American GT 5.** Woo Hoo, the British have arrived! Along with more US reinforcements, the US has ten new armored brigades! Still looks bad though. The American line in the center is crumbling. Game turn six is coming up and to win an automatic victory, the German need 35 Victory points. At this point the Germans have destroyed 27 US units and have two map territorial objects for a total of 29 points. It looks like the US has had it. The American have only managed to eliminate eight German units.



Even if the Germans do not achieve automatic victory in GT 6, it is probably a forgone conclusion that they will get those 35 points by the end of the GT 18 which is the end of the game.

What about the American counterattacks? The US uses the standard combat results table and it does not allow the US to take aggressive action.

**German GT 6.** The Germans have to roll each turn from now on to see if they will get to continue attacking with the special German combat results table. A roll of 1 means that they have to switch to the standard table and this will take the bite out of their attacks!

**[10.3] GERMAN INITIAL COMBAT RESULTS TABLE**

The German Player uses the German Initial Combat Results Table from Game-Turn 1 to Game-Turn 5. At the beginning of Game-Turn 6, the German Player rolls the die. If he rolls a "1" he commences using the Standard Combat Results Table. Any other result and he continues to use the Initial Table. On every Game-Turn thereafter, the German Player repeats the die roll until he rolls a "1" when he switches to the Standard Table.

No 1 rolled so the Germans are still running hot! Can the German reach the magic number this turn?

**[16.2] GERMAN IMMEDIATE VICTORY**

If the German Player scores 35 Victory Points by the end of Game-Turn 6, he wins an immediate victory and the Game ends.

**[16.3] ALLIED CUMULATIVE VICTORY**

If the German Player scores less than 35 Victory Points by the end of Game-Turn 18, the Allied Player wins regardless of the Victory Points Ratio.

**Below is the end of the German Player Turn 6.** As you can see, the Germans only manage to eliminate two US units. They will continue to the last game turn!

The Germans came close, though – their VP total is 33 at the end of the turn!!

**[10.0] ARDENNES COMBAT RESULTS TABLE**

**GERMAN INITIAL COMBAT RESULTS TABLE**

*COMBAT ODDS (Attacking Strength to Defending Strength)*

Die Roll	1-2	1-1	2-1	3-1	4-1	5-1	6-1	7-1	8-1	9-1	Die Roll
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4	Ar2	Ar1	Dr1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr3	Dr3	Ex	De	De	4
5	Ar2	Ar2	Dr1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr2	Dr3	Dr3	Ex	De	5
6	Ar2	Ar2	Dr1	Dr1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr3	Dr3	Ex	De	6

Odds less than 1-2 are treated as 1-2.  
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**STANDARD COMBAT RESULTS TABLE**

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4	Ar3	Ar2	Ar1	Dr1	Dr2	Dr2	Dr2	Dr3	Ex	De	4
5	Ar3	Ar2	Ar2	Ar1	Dr2	Dr2	Dr2	Dr3	Dr3	Ex	5
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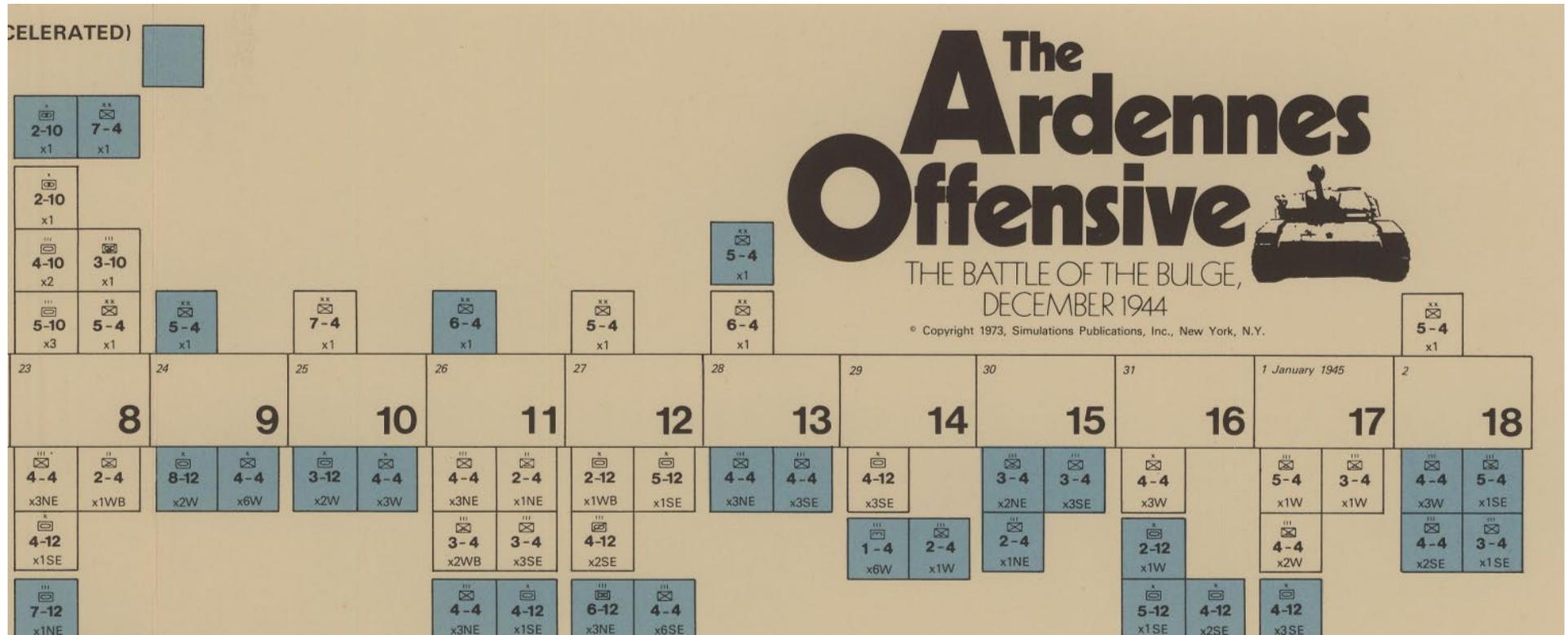
**US GT 6.** US receives massive reinforcements this turn: 12 infantry regiments and one armored brigade. This turn the US has shored up his right flank and has begun not only filling in the front line, but starting to stack units in the front line. Stacking will prevent the Germans from achieving high CRT columns with EX possibilities. Stacking really hinders mobility. Right now the the US strategy is to pin as many German units as possible in order to stop the German advance. Having a second line of reserves for the American will be used to reinforce the front line as necessary and the north/south road through Bastogne are left clear so fast moving armor can rush to threatened areas.



**German GT 7.** Well, howdy howdy! The Germans roll a 1 and now have to use the standard CRT! It seems that failing at the automatic victory in GT 6 and the quick and efficient way the US moved his units into a strong defensive line has caused the Germans to pause and consider as what to do next. Note how they have not advanced on the American's right flank! It seems that the German's impetus and momentum has gone flat surprisingly fast! The German seems more interested in forming up a defensive line in anticipation of an American counterattack than charging ahead!



**Game turns 8-17** devolved into a stagnant front line with not much change. The American's strategy worked and have only lost one unit! There have been lots of attacks, but all resulted in ineffective retreats. The American player did start feeling guilty about not conducting a counter offensive and did attempt some front to flank attacks, but bad die rolls prevented him from destroying four or five German units that he had dead to rights! No pictures were taken of this part of the game because they would have all looked the same.



**[Ed. Note:** Above the Turn track are German Reinforcements. As you can see, there are very few new troops coming to the German's aid, while the Allies are flooding the region with their troops in the same time period. (Ignore the blue-tinted units for this scenario.)

**Game turn 18!!** The German has 33 VP. He manages to eliminate one US unit. On his turn, the American forces a retreat and takes one map edge VP hex away from the German. He also eliminated one more German unit.

Final VP total for German is 33. The US managed to kill only ten German units! Since the German player did not achieve 35 VP, the US player automatically wins. Picture shows positions at the end of the game. Post game analysis begins now!

**Donald Byron Johnson:** if the Germans would have taken 2 more, they would have won as VP ratio would be  $\geq 1.5$  so it was close!

**Bruce Redenour:** if the German player had hit 31 destroyed American units and four VP hexes for 35 his VP ratio would have been 3.5/1 over the US. I only managed to whack nine German units up to GT 6 and only one more at the end of the game (10 total) so you can see the validity of my strategy of holding the line rather than trying for elimination of German units. A large percentage of German eliminated would probably have been during EX results just adding to the German total.

End of Game Turn 18: End of Game. Allied Victory

