

BARBAROSSA:

The Forgotten Classic by P H Bolton

If the Game Evaluation Tables issued by S&T are a reliable guide then we shall probably see this game disappear from the ratings in the not too distant future. For me at least, this will be a pity — but it does I think prove one thing — evaluation tables like cricket averages should not be taken as a sacred cow in assessment of true value.

Currently Barbarossa has a % played of 15 — just how many players are guilty of not sending feedback information (and I'm one of them) I don't know — but it's fairly obvious that this game is not a best seller. Why I don't know? It's got just about everything — if you like clean well balanced and fast moving action. Perhaps one reason for the decline of Barbarossa is that since it was first published in 1969 several other games have arrived covering this period, such as 'Stalingrad', 'WWII', 'Third Reich', 'Drang nach Osten' and 'War in the East'. Another slight possibility is that the map of Barbarossa is not the best ever printed even with the 2nd edition reprint, but that is certainly nit-picking.

Well you pay your money and make your choice — so what do you get when you buy Barbarossa. Five different scenarios — Barbarossa, Stalingrad, Zitadelle, Berlin — these being short (average 6-7 moves each) games and a full 45 move Campaign Game. If that is not enough, 15 'what-if' situations are supplied allowing any permutations of them. Of course, in a game of this scale there are weather and supply problems — Terrific!

S&T classed Barbarossa some years ago as an intermediate game — but the German player needs a fair degree of subtlety and aggression to win against the ever growing number of Soviet units.

The game is played on a movement-combat-

movement system and units may only give combat if in attack supply. For the Germans attack supply occurs when a unit is within 6 hexes of a supply unit and the path is unobstructed by enemy units. The Soviets must be within 3 hexes unobstructed by enemy units or their zones of control; this is a general rule with an exception during the months October-March when German units must be adjacent to a supply unit in order to attack. The movement rate of German units is practically halved from October-March, so good planning is required, to be able to keep the offensive from being bogged down.

The Barbarossa scenario is probably the most interesting as it demonstrates quite effectively the way the Germans were able to decimate the opposition in 1941. However, this scenario is by no means a walk-over. The Soviet player is able, by good initial deployment to give the Germans several problems, and if the Soviets are able to form a line, then German gains can be minimal.

The German player starts off with:

4 armoured armies	11-8-8
7 infantry armies	5-7-3
4 luftwaffe units	(2)-1-2
4 supply units	0-1-1
2 Finnish inf. armies	2-4-2
2 Rumanian inf. armies	2-4-2

From the 2nd to 8th move the German receives 1 supply unit each move and he gets 1 infantry army, 2 Italian and 1 Hungarian army corps as reserves. Also the German armour and infantry armies can be broken down/reformed: $11-8-8 = 3 \times 3-2-8$, $5-7-3 = 3 \times 1-2-3$, $2-4-2 = 2 \times 1-2-2$. This breaking down/reforming is the key to an encirclement of Soviet units, and proper use of the units must be planned.

Facing the Germans, the Soviets can muster

the following:

15 infantry armies	2-4-2
11 armoured corps	2-1-5
3 mechanised inf. corps	1-2-5
2 supply units	0-1-2

But 4 infantry armies, 3 armoured and 3 mechanised infantry corps must be deployed in Moscow and other cities, leaving the rest of the units to cover a 22 hex Western and Finnish front. This gives the Soviet player quite a problem, especially as each hex must be covered by an infantry unit or its zone of control. Adding to the Soviet's problem is the Combat Results Table. This leaves less chance than in most/many other games. At 1-1 there is only a 1 in 6 chance of not getting the defender to retreat. At 2-1 the results range from Dr 1-4, and from 3-1 defender eliminated starts to appear. The Soviets start off with only 2 supply units and only receives 4 more during the 8 moves — so any counter attack has really got to justify its use. However, despite these disadvantages, it is possible to deny the Germans big gains.

I recently read a very good article on Barbarossa written by Ralph Vickers which appeared in a magazine called 'Europa'. The article, the only one I've ever seen on this game, is very comprehensive in detail and is to be recommended to be read — by anyone who has any interest in Barbarossa. My objective is simply to tell anyone who is keen on Board War-games 'if you haven't tried Barbarossa, you really are missing out'.

I don't propose to mention the other scenarios. The Barbarossa scenario has to be played and played and then played to appreciate all its good points. Then try the other scenarios — they all give you problems which need careful working out but it's very enjoyable trying them.