

Subject: Re: Operation Michael

Hiya

Two points brought up about Op Mikey.

First, the standard SCS rule regarding attacks below the lowest table odd should apply. Delete note 1 from the the combat results table (and, if you are so inclined, change note 2 to note 1).

Second, there are no terrain shifts for the artillery barrages that I can find. I suppose at some time there was (or at least some were considered), but I did not catch that when I did the layout. So either delete the "adjust for terrain" from the sentence or just always assume the adjustment is "0 columns".

Russ

Subject: Re: Op Michael set up

A couple of questions for the Op Michael folks:

(1) Although the breakdown of artillery groups is given for the Germans, it is not provided for the British. There is also no formal mention of how these artillery groups are allocated or whether any appear as reinforcements, etc.

Now, after setting up the Allies (who set up first), I also noticed that there IS a breakdown provided for the Germans (e.g. how many 6-7-1's, etc for each army). I also noticed in the Player's Notes that there are 16 artillery groups provided to the British -- all that are provided for on the counter sheet. I assume,, therefore, that the British will set up all the artillery units.

Then I noticed that these artillery groups have numbers on the left side of the counters. Now these are listed as designations in the rules and, absent any other information, assumed that these were amorphous artillery groups. it was only AFTER I set up the Germans that I realized that these numbers might correspond to the British corps. Of course, by that time, we had already set up the Germans so the british now had an advantage since we weren't going to go through the entire set up again simply to place the British artillery before the Germans set up.

Were our assumptions correct?

If so, why was it necessary to read the Player's Notes before you actually pushed any counters to get information that you really need to set up the game in the first place?

(2) Can German divisions be broken down into Sturmblocks prior to setting up or must the Germans wait until the Breakdown segment before he can breakdown divisions into Sturmblocks?

I hate to be a kvetch but this can radically alter the way the game starts. For instance, if the Germans can break down divisions BEFORE setting up, he can spread these Sturmblocks across the front, without any regard to corps/army boundaries. To stretch this to the absurd, the Germans could break the entire 9th (as an example) Corps into Sturmblocks, allocate these to the rest of the army, and leave that segment of the front entirely vacant.

Now maybe this is allowed, maybe it isn't. But it will certainly change the way the game is initially set up, which is obviously quite important to the way the game is played. Yet, as far as I can see, there is absolutely no mention of whether this is allowed or not. We assumed it wasn't because this seemed to be a "common sense" solution to the problem. But, as I have learned, what is common sense to one person is non-sense to someone else.

What is the ruling on this?

May divisions be broken down prior to initial placement or must the Germans wait until the first Break down segment before allocating the Sturmblöcke? If they can break down prior to initial placement, must they start out in stacks (as they would if broken down in the Breakdown segment) or can they be allocated anyway the German player wishes? Are there any other restrictions on these initial breakdowns?

We really can't start unless we get some clarification on this.

Thank you.

Subject: Re: Op Michael set up

> If so, why was it necessary to read the Player's Notes before you actually
> pushed any counters to get information that you really need to set up the
> game in the first place?

** It wasn't. I expected the player to read 5.0f instead.

Thanks for the response. You may note that my Rule 5.0 says"

'In all Campaign Scenarios...all Artillery units must set up in trench hexes. British Artillery units must set up within the appropriate Corps set up area...."

Now, after the fact, I recognize that one can conclude that the phrase "all artillery" means "each and every artillery unit." However, what is more normal is that the phrase "all artillery" might also (and usually) be taken to mean "all artillery that (actually) start the game on the map." You must also take into account that if Rule 5.0f is read before setting up the actual units, which is, I would think, usual, one might not know that all artillery sets up on the map but that the "all" in this instance refers to the artillery units that DO start on the map. And since there is nothing that tells you which ones those are.....

It is also interesting that German artillery, despite being notated the exact same way as Allied artillery, are specifically broken down as to army area. There is no such notation for British artillery. Is it not logical to assume that what was done for German artillery would also be done for British artillery?

Lastly, although all the infantry/cavalry units are color coded to match their appropriate corps, artillery units aren't. And although the rules do state that the number to the left of the unit symbol is its designation, for infantry/cavalry, that designation is brigade/division. Why would you assume that for artillery, it would be something different?

In other words, simply reading Rule 5.0f is NOT enough (unless you already know the answer to the question)

Subject: Re: Op Michael set up

Hi <name not provided> :-)

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> Were our assumptions correct?

** Yes, they set up with their corps and that number is the corps designation.

> If so, why was it necessary to read the Player's Notes before you actually pushed any counters to get information that you really need to set up the game in the first place?

** It wasn't. I expected the player to read 5.0f instead.

> (2) Can German divisions be broken down into Sturmblocks prior to setting up or must the Germans wait until the Breakdown segment before he can breakdown divisions into Sturmblocks?

** No, they can't set up that way, they can be "built" in that first Break Down phase (i.e. before they move).

Dean

Subject: Re: Op Michael set up

> In other words, simply rading Rule 5.0f is NOT enough (unless you already know the answer to the question)

Yup, but wargamers are smart folks...I bet they can figure out what the one number on those artillery units are (especially after they look at the German set up).

You are right, the number should have been on the right side of the counter and the Brit main scenario should have listed the artillery like the small scenarios.

Dean

Subject: Re: Op Michael set up

> I did not deploy any british brigades in the forward zone. Is that OK?

You can put them up there (provided 4.3 is followed anyway)...not smart, but allowed.

Dean

Richard Simon

There is a peculiarity with **OM** in terms of step losses, scale, and replacements.

Both British and German full strength divisions have roughly the same combat strengths. However, the German infantry divisions have only two steps while the British have six steps.

Now the Germans can rectify this situation by breaking down their divisions into Sturmblöcke at the beginning of their turn. And voila: a two-step divisions have magically been transformed into a six-step unit. (which they can do at the end of the turn) Note that breaking down a division into Sturmblöcke does *increase* its combat power; it merely increases its ability to take losses.

Further, by judicious manipulation of this system, the Germans can "play" the replacement system to their advantage. By spreading out his losses among his Sturmblöcke, the Germans can absorb a number of losses. In the Exploitation Phase, he moves the half-strength Sturmblöcke out of the line and into a hex where they can be recombined at the end of the turn (into a reduced strength division). In the Replacement Phase of the *next* turn, he can expend one replacement point to restore the unit to full strength then, in the following Breakdown Phase, return the unit to its Sturmblock configuration. In effect, this allows the Germans to replace three steps with only replacement point (whereas, if they apply the replacement point to a division, they would only rebuild one step)

Now, I am *not* claiming that the game is broken because of this but it is certainly an "interesting" design decision. In effect, it makes the unit size/scale symbol somewhat moot; you're no longer playing with brigades/divisions but with amorphous "units." It also allows for some gamey play with replacement points.

Now, whether you agree with the above analysis or not, it is, it seems to me, worthy of some further clarification

Pat Collins

Now, whether you agree with the above analysis or not, it is, it seems to me, worthy of some further clarification.

No, I think it's pretty accurate. The designer is on consim-I, and has posted some of his design decisions. He really put a lot of thought (way more than I ever would) into the design. You may not agree with his decisions, or what he wanted to model, but certainly there was method.

I think what was achieved was how to model the effectiveness of Sturm troops, without the "superman" effect. Also, how to model how they broke down, and how the Allies were able to contain the offensive.

It seems to me the "breakdown" and replacement issues are key to getting that right.

Markus Stumptner

Now, I am not claiming that the game is broken because of this but it is certainly an "interesting" design decision. In effect, it makes the unit size/scale symbol somewhat moot; you're no longer playing with brigades/divisions but with amorphous "units."

There is no unit size symbol on the Sturmblöcke, so one assumes the designer was aware of this. I'm also getting the impression (bearing in mind that I just got it and haven't received it yet) that the replacement point issue is only a problem if one assumes the "step" must be a fixed size over all the units, but it is obvious from the way divisions break down into Sturmblöcke that this is not the case. Formations in sturmblock mode are effectively more resilient than "normal" divisions using standard doctrine - what is

happening when they take losses is obviously not that 3 times the personnel rises from the ground so that 3 times the soldiers can die but 2/3 of the ghosts evaporate upon reformation, but the way they fight makes them 3 times more resilient. (This is obviously an abstraction but from what I've seen seems to work OK in the game - ask me again after I've played it. I'm not addressing how game tactics work with them, just the replacement step issue.) As you said yourself (or wanted to say, I assume), the Sturmblock breakdown does *not* affect combat power. But the individual six step losses do, since reformation is on strength basis, not step basis. So, if three Sturmblocks with three step losses get together, they will in general have lost just as much strength as the division would have lost in one step (they drop by 4-5 points, the Sturmblocks by 1-2 points). And the one replacement step replaces that strength. I don't see the problem. Based on the assumption that the higher number of steps represents higher resilience, it would in fact be strange if 3 replacement steps were needed to replace the same number of casualties as in the original division.

It certainly is an interesting decision, but I don't need to put the "interesting" in quotes. It's a creative approach, I'll see how it holds up in play. There's nothing intrinsically negative about it just because it's a new trick. (And frankly, the SCS could use some new tricks. :-)

Steve Sheftic

Well, although the question was sort of answered (i.e., attacks at less than 1:2 are not allowed)

Richard, the "not allowed" is incorrect. The attack happens, but only the attacker loses.

Richard Simon

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Granting your point, for the moment, the fact is that the Sturmblocks weren't more resilient. They fought more effectively because they were so trained and equipped. This would, it seems to me, translate more directly into increased combat power rather than an ability to take losses, which is, in part, a large degree of their effectiveness (The other part being exploit capable -- fair enough)

Under the current game design, if a full strength German Division meets a full strength British division in open terrain, regardless of who attacks, the British Division has three times greater staying power. Only if the German division breaks down into Sturmblocks is its depth equal to that of the British division (with no corresponding effect on the division's combat power). That is, a full strength German Division initially has two steps while a British Division of the same strength has six.

The Sturmblocks were an offensive doctrine, yet the primary effect on the game is defensive; the German's ability to take losses rather than any increase in the unit's combat power. It seems to me that this getting the historical lessons back-asswards.

Then, of course, there is the game that can be played with the replacement points.