

Conscripts!

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It's My Party...

Major Tom

Welcome to the first newsletter for the DC Conscripts ASL Club. As this section is titled, this is where, as the editor, ... **I'll say what I want to.**

Right up front I want to extend many thanks to the Austin ASL Club for their assistance in getting this published. As you may note, this product shares many characteristics of **Banzai!!** (their club newsletter). We are standing on the shoulders of Matt Shostak, Sam Tyson, and David Hailey in particular.

While this newsletter will have several regular features, we (our Club Troika, and I) welcome articles of all types related to ASL. So if you have a good idea for an article, write it up and send it in. We can help with editing, so even if you can only get a rough draft done your ideas are welcome.

At this point is the plug for input on the name of the newsletter. Please find and peruse the article on our search for a name. This newsletter is for you, the club members, so please participate in our search for a name.

Rules Reminder: A neat little rule new to me is the American M4's with the multiple hits capability (shown on the vehicle counter as a white background in the ROF box.) See U.S. Multi-Applicable Vehicle Note R.



Name Search!!

Help Name This Newsletter

Tom Meier

We are searching for a name for this newsletter and we need your help. At the June club meeting, I presented names generated by the membership and requested feedback from the members. I continue to discuss ideas with the members and our Troika. The goal is to have decided on a title prior to publishing issue #2.

Here are some things I think we should consider in our search for a newsletter name. I think first it should reflect our purpose (to play ASL) and a collective identifiable spirit to go with our club name (DC Conscripts). The name should be catchy, both visually and verbally, to interest folks to take a look at it. Based on feedback so far and the success of other newsletters/fanzines, a term or phrase from the ASL system might be appropriate.

The names nominated so far are:

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| Scripts | Stavka |
| The Peoples' Daily | To the Last Bullet |
| On the Barricades (or To the Barricades) | |
| Conscript's Directive | Human Wave |
| Conscript Rumbblings | Intensive Fire |
| Final Fire | Rout Path |
| Rally Point | Battle Hardened |

Hopefully this list has gotten your creative juices flowing. Take a moment now and send those ideas to me or give me a call before you forget them!!

With your help, we'll find a newsletter name we can all rally around.

Playing ASL Without Dice

John Slotwinski

He diced me!

I played better, but he had really hot dice, so he won.

Don't you hate hearing those words? I know I do. My opponent whines that I have hot dice after I gun down his morale-6 unit running in the open on 4(-2) shot. Whatever. There are a few times when I have witnessed some severe dicings, but by and large in my experience the victory goes to the player who played better. The exception is scenarios that are very small, where one broken weapon or KIAed leader can ruin the whole scenario for you.

Still, ASL will always have a luck factor tied to it that depends only on the probability of dice rolling. What if you could eliminate the uncertainty of dice rolling? Would that be a better indicator of your skill? Here's a simple way to almost completely remove the luck factor from ASL:

Instead of using dice, each player uses two sets of cards Ace through six. One set is black and one is red, corresponding to the uncolored and colored dies normally rolled during a game. Lay out the cards in two rows, by color, face up in front of each player. When a DR is called for the player must turn over one red and red black card. Those cards turned over correspond to the DR. So if the player turns over a red Ace and a black 6 the DR is 1,6 (1 being colored.) Once all of the cards are turned over, turn them back face up. That is, you cannot use a card again until all of your cards have been used. Using this method you will still roll a single die for possible SAN activations. It seems to me that this is one aspect of the game that should remain completely random.

Now, this method adds another strategy dimension to the game since you get to pick when to use certain combinations of numbers. If you like you can play your cards so that you never roll a 12! Or if you 'play your cards right' you might save that 12 for a PTC. You get to decide. You really need ROF? Pull that red ace when you roll.

So the next time your opponent gives you a hard time about getting diced, offer to play the scenario again, this time using cards instead of dice.

Commissar's Corner

Chris Baer

When he approached me about writing an occasional column for the club newsletter, editor Tom Meier assured me that there actually were Conscripts who possessed the necessary educational skills to read the newsletter. This came as quite a shock to me -- as anyone who has ever tried to lead Inexperienced infantry in an assault could tell you, they seldom display the needed initiative to pass a morale check, let alone a spelling test. Perhaps this is just a special bunch of Conscripts, though. Let me introduce you to them.

Meet the Conscripts

The metropolitan Washington, DC, area has long been host to a great many Advanced Squad Leader players. Indeed, between the relative density of players, its proximity to two-thirds of the ASL Triple Crown tournaments (Winter Offensive and DonCon), and MMP's HQ at its periphery, this area is certainly in contention for the title of ASL Mecca. In recent years, however, the area lacked a bona fide ASL club. Playtest groups, large and small, met in the area, to be sure, and groups of friends got together in the way of all gamers. But a club --with all the trimmings, like tournaments, ladders, opponent finders, and a beacon for newbies stuck on collateral attacks -- was nowhere to be found.

When Avalon Hill announced its sale to Hasbro around the time of DonCon '98, ASL's immediate future was uncertain. John Slotwinski, fresh off his Winter Offensive championship earlier that year, proposed the creation of a local ASL club to ensure that, regardless of its corporate future, ASL would always have a home in the Metro Washington area. Entitled Conscripts, to play off of the name of the club's web site host, the District Commissar's House, the club had its first meeting at Little Wars Game Shop in Fairfax, Virginia, in the fall of 1998. Turn-out was fair, the first ladder matches were played, and people promised to return. Little did Conscript in Charge Slotwinski know how well things would turn out.

Since those humble beginnings, the club has met over twenty times at both Little Wars and at the Maryland site, the Elkridge Public Library. Along the way, the club gained a Minister of Truth (John Appel), and the District Commissar (that would be me) became a regular fixture as well. Attendance at meetings has swelled from half-squad to two full squads at times (and we're talking Russian squads of 14, not American squads of 10), and the club mailing list boasts close to half a company worth of

potential and actual Conscripts. Over a hundred ladder results have been recorded. Not one but two club tournaments have been held, with Conscript Chad Cummins taking the inaugural title and Conscript Duncan McGill claiming this year's championship in a crowded field of 24. The first club t-shirt, with logos designed by Conscript Emeritus Chris Chapman, made the Conscripts the talk of Winter Offensive -- we were there in force and made our presence known, with some-time Conscript Jeff Coyle taking second place at WO '00 and Conscript McGill winning a mini-tournament there.

The future holds even greater promise for the club. This newsletter represents an attempt at outreach, to contact those who aren't online and those who might be interested in the game. The next several club meetings will be organized around theme clinics (purely optional) for seldom visited areas such as Night, Desert, and Things that Fall out of the Sky. We also have plans to hold Newbie Teaching Sessions at Little Wars Game Shop in conjunction with the release of v2 of the ASLRB. Newsletter editor Conscript Tom Meier also wears another feather in his jaunty Conscript cap as the Club Liaison Conscript, seeking to arrange home-and-home series with other clubs within a day's drive.

If you're already a member of the club, either actively or simply on the mailing list, thanks for having joined -- we really wouldn't be the club we are without you and your support. If you haven't joined yet and are in the area (and we define Metro Washington as anyone who can make the drive to Fairfax or Elkrigde and arrive in fit enough shape to play a scenario), please contact me or John Slotwinski. Conscriptation isn't voluntary, you know . . .

A Word About Promotions

Some long-time club members have expressed curiosity about why some Conscripts are 4th Class while others are 3rd Class. In order to put your minds at ease that it's not completely arbitrary, a few words about promotion and rank are required.

All Conscripts start out as Conscript 4th Class. Show up at a meeting, submit a ladder result -- nothing to it. Not that there's no pride in being a Conscript 4th Class; no, it takes a special sort to get thrust to the front of a human wave like that. To make it to Conscript 3rd Class, however, demands something even more than merely breathing. A substantial contribution to the club is required, either in kopeks or in sweat equity. Typically this involves either taking on a project within the club or by winning either the club tournament or another tournament.

Only a select few have made it to Conscript 3rd Class. They are: Chad Cummins (1999 Club Champion); Matt

Deuber (services above and beyond the call of duty); Duncan McGill (2000 Club Champion); Tom Meier (newsletter editor/club liaison); and Pat O'Brien (Ladder Result Archivist).

As for Conscript 2nd Class -- don't even ask. No one has even ever come close to meeting the standards for that. We'll cross that bridge when we get to it -- most likely with a human wave.

For the record, here's the official list of Conscripts Ranks:

Conscript 5th Class -- Trench Digger's Lackey
Conscript 4th Class -- Trench Digger
Conscript 3rd Class -- Foxhole Digger's Mate
Conscript 2nd Class -- Foxhole Digger
Conscript 1st Class -- Shovel Supervisor

Roll low, Conscripts -- you've only got ML 6 . . .

Club Notes

Minister of Truth, John Appel

Night Fighters Clinic

For you Conscripts who have not yet passed your NRTC (Night Rules Task Check), the Minister of Truth will be conducting a "Night Fighter's Clinic" at the August 12th club meeting. The minister is an experienced Night Fighter, having playtested "Howard's Men" so many times that he can draw that portion of the Pegasus Bridge map from memory.

The clinic will utilize in the ideologically sound "Explanation, Demonstration, Practical Exercise" method. Lecture & demonstrations and a new training scenario will be provided for trainees to play, with the Minister providing guidance and Q&A.

Copies of all relevant Q&A and errata will be provided. Play aids may be provided if the Minister is able to secure permission from MMP.

Trainees must contact the Minister at john_appel@hotmail.com or jfa@etherwatch.org and inform him of their interest. Trainees should read E1 in its entirety before the clinic. Reading J.R. van Mechlen's classic article "Bring on the Night" is highly recommended; contact the Minister for a copy if you do not have it.

ASL Etiquette, or, The Finer Points of Playing Finely

By John Appel

ASL is a game. For many of us, gaming is our primary hobby, and ASL has supplanted other forms of wargaming, RPGs or multi-player gaming. And while I like to win and prefer to win more often than I lose, the social aspects of the hobby are just as important as winning games - and perhaps even more so, for while victory is fleeting, friends are for life.

However, ASL is a competitive game, and in the HoB it's easy to forget that it's only a game. Here are a few tips on how to make playing the game as enjoyable as winning the game.

(Some of the following are drawn from a list written up quite some time ago by the guys at DAGGER, the Detroit ASL club. I'd credit them specifically, but I can't locate a copy.)

Before starting a game:

1. When selecting a scenario, tell your opponent if you've played it before, which side you played and what the results were. All things being equal, past experience with a scenario gives you an edge, and not informing your opponent about it is just plain unsporting.

2. If you think a scenario is strongly unbalanced in favor of one side, tell your opponent! Some dogs are fun in their own way (hey, look at "The Bushmasters" - when else do you get to launch an 18-squad Banzai?) and some people like to take the underdog side to prove a point - but make it an informed choice.

3. Give your opponent privacy when setting up. Even if you're not looking at his deployment, sitting at the table is a distraction.

4. Set up as quickly as you can. I know, I know, setup is crucial in many scenarios, but playing time is limited for most of us - and I'd rather spend the time dropping dice and playing than waiting an hour while my opponent sets up "Aachen's Pall."

If you absolutely must have a perfect setup, spend some of your own time and work out setups ahead of time. Of course, if you've done that, you should let your opponent know.

5. The pre-game TaPPh (Taunt and Pose Phase) is a time-honored tradition, but don't get carried away. Words have come back to haunt more than one trash-talker, myself included.

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During the game:

1. Shake hands when you start. It's the polite thing to do, and politeness helps society function more smoothly.

2. Don't handle your opponent's counters unless he says it's OK. You may have forgotten that the bottom units in that stack have been concealed since setup...

3. In a non-tournament game, keep a loose attitude about A.2. If your opponent has forgotten an action which would not yet have affected play (e.g., repairing that SW at the bottom of the 8-counter stack) let him go ahead.

4. And keep a loose attitude about the ASOP as well. It's ok to educate the other guy - "Hey, I remember it as the 3 R's, Repair, Recover, Rally" - but again, if it doesn't make a difference in the course of the game let it ride. It's OK to be a bit more AR in a tournament, but again, be polite about it.

5. Watch your language, particularly at club meetings where the space is public and the curious (or the young) may wander in. Hey, just about everybody cuts loose with "F*\$K!" or "Dammit!" after gacking that big roll, or waltzing that 10-2 stack in the boresited location of the 9-2's kill stack. But what's acceptable as an exception becomes boorish as the rule. Some people are genuinely offended by harsh language at any time, but nobody likes to sit across the table from someone who sounds like Andrew Dice Clay.

6. If you have a rules or LOS dispute, settle it quickly. Find a knowledgeable bystander, or at least a neutral third party, if you truly can't reach consensus. Either way, accept the result gracefully and get back to play.

7. Whining is unattractive in my 7-year old, and much less so in an adult. Some situations warrant a little griping - "How did you ever survive that 30 -2 shot?", or "Well, call me next week when that .50 caliber loses ROF" - but don't gripe about that HS that got zapped moving in the open.

8. Crowing is OK, but there's a difference between exulting in a well-executed ambush or stylish play (like my own battle cry, "The quarterback is toast!" after whacking an enemy leader) and gloating.

9. Play as quickly as you can. Does any HS really warrant 15 minutes of agony over whether you should move it in one hex or the other?

10. ...But don't move so quickly your opponent doesn't have time to make a decent decision about Defensive Fire, especially if there are a number of HIP units. By corollary, ask the other guy to slow down a bit if you need to.

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11. If the other guy has failed his PMC and wants to concede, but you think the fat lady hasn't sung yet, tell him so (and why). Give him a minute or so to think about it, and if he still wants to concede, fine. But if you win because the other guy truly misunderstood that he still had a decent chance and conceded, how much is that victory truly worth?

12. By the same token, if victory is truly impossible - you've passed the magic limit for some VC ratio, or your units don't have the MF to make it to the victory area, offer to concede and explain why. You could be mistaken, and your opponent should tell you if so (see #11!) You can always play it out to see how close you can get.

13. Accept victory or defeat with grace, and shake hands.

After the game:

1. Help clean up, especially if using the other guy's set. At the very least, sort your pieces and any informational counters. If there's some special circumstance - your wife was expecting you home at 6, but the game was close and you finished at 7:30 - explain what's up.

2. Give credit where it's due. If you lost, you lost. The dice can be crucial, especially in short games, but most often the other guy either a) had a better plan or b) had better execution or c) both.

3. If you have time for a post-mortem, try to point out what your opponent did well along with the sub-optimum moves. If there was some opportunity or tactic to share, share it! By corollary, be open to input.

Remember - this is supposed to be fun, right?

A lot of hobbies are things one pursues solo. (My boss, for instance, crafts and paints duck decoys.) But ASL is a group activity - at least a group of two - so interaction with one another is a big component of our hobby. Keep it fun; keep things in perspective. Relax and enjoy the game!

District Commissar's Style

Points:

Volunteer??

We are looking for a style point editor to collect input from games occurring throughout club play to be highlighted here. An example is Dan Nowicki's style point nomination from the Club tourney.

For Absurd Allied Minor SMC Valor. A Battle Transcript:

"Entrenched high upon the slopes, the Norwegian 9-2 gazed confidently over the valley below with his first line squad and MMG at the ready. As the first Germans rounded the corner he quickly took out his counterpart 9-2 and accompanying infantry. Unfortunately this was only 11 of 169 Germans overrunning the hill and valley. Worse, during the opening defense of turn 2, the 9-2/MMC's MMG broke during prep fire. The Germans opened up in defensive fire and broke the Norwegian 1st line squad. The good condition 9-2 routed with his squad down the back side of the hill. Unfortunately, the Norwegian 9-2 was weaponless in a remote patch of woods with his broken comrades and no nearby support. The Germans quickly caught up by the end of turn 2, thereby forcing the broken squad to surrender. The Norwegian 9-2, however, stood firm in the woods. With his back to open ground in the beginning of turn 3 there was no choice. Charge the full enemy squad and release his comrades for the greater glory of Norway. By the great Norse gods, he survived the CC and melee ensued. In the next turn, with the support of the German prisoners (his former comrades when entrenched upon the hill) he killed the German bastards."

Club Ladder

Our Humble Club Ladder

(Through June 17, 2000)

Player	Points	Record
Duncan McGill	1475	15-0
John Slotwinski	1294	16-9-1
Chad Cummins	1265	7-1
John Appel	1254	7-1
Mike O'Leary	1237	7-2-1
Ken Dunn	1138	3-2
Pat O'Brien	1135	13-17
David LaGraffe	1124	4-1
Aaron Krebs	1106	10-11
Tim Stevens	1069	5-5
Jim Kraft	1068	2-1
Dan Stanhagen	1068	3-2
Matt Deuber	1067	3-3
Tom Meier	1064	5-6
Jeff Coyle	1064	3-2
Marc Genberg	1055	2-1
Joe Jackson	1055	3-2
Mark Bell	1053	2-1
Bill Pittman	1048	11-13
Eric Jablow	1048	1-0
Damon Norko	1043	1-0
Jason Cameron	1035	5-6
Bryan Kropf	1028	3-5
Neil Stanhagen	1017	1-1
Wayne Hadady	1010	4-6
Chris Shields	991	1-2
John Gorkowski	987	1-3
Chris Baer	979	7-12
Chris Chapman	972	0-1
Robert Schaff	972	0-1
Larry Memmott	970	0-1
Jan Spoor	966	7-10
John Meyers	963	1-3
Scott Genberg	942	0-2
Stu Rubin	940	2-6
Dan Nowicki	938	2-7
David Theissen	937	0-2
Steve Petras	934	0-2
Elon Weinstein	892	0-4
Jeff Evich	853	0-7

Send Ladder results to Chris Baer and cc Pat O'Brien

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Next Issue

- More articles about the game of ASL
- Club Meeting Recaps
- Club Ladder
- Much more!!!

Club Meetings

The club generally meets on the second Saturday of each month. The location alternates between Little Wars Hobby Shop (in Fairfax, VA) and the Elkridge (MD) Public Library. Our thanks to Faron & Alena Betchley, owners of Little Wars, for allowing us to use their gaming space.

Directions to LITTLE WARS game shop, Fairfax, Virginia:

- Take 66W from the Beltway (I-495)
- Exit onto 50E
- Make a right on Jermantown Road
- Proceed to 29 (Lee Highway) and make a right.
- Little Wars is in the first shopping center on your left (in the same center as Chili's)
- 11213K Lee Highway Phone: (703) 352-9222

Directions to Maryland Site:

The Maryland site is the Elkridge (Howard Co., MD) library.

- Take I-95 to 100 East (towards Glen Burnie)
- 1/4 mile down, exit onto Rt. 1 North (Elkridge)
- 1.5 miles down, left turn at the sign for Rowanberry Dr.(across from APA Trucking), which leads immediately to the library parking lot. The library building is light tan & gray brick with a dark blue roof. Look for the building, not just the signs -- they are small and have small lettering, so they're hard to spot.

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