

Desert Hills – Blitzkrieg Commander battle report

9th May 2007: Nik & Dean, Taunton, Somerset

Desert Hills: October 1942 Italian & German army v British 8th Army

Deliberate Attack: Axis 2005 points v Allies 1000 points



The battlefield - note the Allied minefields

Scenario: It is late 1942 - following the overwhelming of the British armour in the Desert Sun, the Allies have fallen back to positions in the hills overlooking a critical supply route...Digging in, they await the inevitable push from the numerically superior Axis forces. Intelligence suggests further reinforcements of the Italians with DAK veterans. The objective for the attack is simple - whoever controls the high ground controls the road to the front. With the Allies dug in on top of the hills and mines laid in three key strategic areas, the Axis form battlelines...



The Allied battlelines: L-R rear: Infantry on hill; HQ; infantry, HMG, 6 pdr on hill, infantry in front of hill; mortars to rear of hill; CO, infantry, 2 pdr; HMG, 6 pdr on hill, infantry in front of hill; L-R front: infantry; FAO; HMG; HQ; infantry & HMG on road - off table: 3 x 25 pdrs



British deployment



Axis deployment: L-R: Italian artillery at rear; Italian armour - M13/40s & HQ & FAO; Italian infantry, HMGs, mortar, Semoventes; German infantry, HMG, mortar, infantry gun & truck, 88mm & truck, 37 mm ATG & truck, Recce & CO; German armour - PzIIIs, PzIVs, halftracks, infantry & HMG



He's enjoying putting a tray-load of stuff down y'know...



*There - all set...the Allies start to feel a *little* outnumbered right about now...*

The best laid plans...

Allies: I've taken no tanks here - with 1000 points I've got:

CO, 2 x HQ, FAO

12 x infantry

3 x HMG, 2 x mortars, 1 x 2pdr support

2 x 6pdr ATG

3 x 25pdr artillery & 2 assets HE

3 x minefields

Plan is essentially to force the Axis advance to avoid minefields and difficult terrain - and into concentrated fire zones...slightly refused flank and a definite stronghold in the centre. There is some potential of advanced infantry & HMG who are dug-in behind walls on the road to further disrupt the advance before falling back...

Axis: forces are roughly 2/3 German, 1/3 Italian:

German: CO, HQ, FAO, FAC

6 x infantry & 3 Sdkfz 251/1
2 x HMG, 1 x mortar
1 x 75mm infantry gun, 1 x 88mm ATG & truck, 1 x 37mm & truck
1 x Sdkfz 231 Recce
3 x PzIV III short 50mm
2 x PzIV short 75mm
2 x 105mm artillery
1 x Stuka
Italian: 2 x HQ, FAO
6 x infantry
2 x HMG, 1 x mortar
1 x 47mm ATG & truck
6 x M13/40
2 x Semovente
2 x 75mm artillery
Assets: 1 air; 1 HE; 3 smoke

The Axis plan was again simple - armour on each flank and infantry advance to contact in the centre. Kill as many Brits as possible & knock them off the hills...subtle then..!

Early manoeuvring:

With the attacker going first, things started well for the Axis forces: the air and artillery assets went in successfully and suppressed some infantry straightaway. The Italians over on the Axis right flank, clearly inspired by their success in the battle for the village, moved up nicely as did the German mechanised force on the left. Leading from the rear the German CO, with a CV of 10, proved himself to be suffering from a night on the schnapps and promptly rolled an 11...he'd better pull his socks up or he'll find himself in colder climes methinks...



Can you say "Boo!" - this works well with sound effects...go on, try it - there's no-one listening...

First turn for the Allies was pretty much a non-event: with everything dug-in and a failed artillery request...so the Axis continued pretty much where they'd left off - the Italians fairly rampaging up the flank showing their Teutonic cousins the way forward - who promptly all failed to move. Not a great start it must be said. Some largely indiscriminate firing from the Allies drew first blood in the way of a German infantry unit and a couple others suppressed.

Once more the Italians continued their push for the hills, seemingly oblivious to any threat of danger whatsoever - very contrary to expectations it must be said! The German armour finally decided to resume their advance and began to rumble towards the bend in the road, threatening the dug-in British there.



German armour threatens the BUA

Over to the German CO - who this time really failed to shake off his gluhwein hangover and blundered, taking a couple of hits in the process. Three turns and he's still nursing his head and berating his batman, shouting impatiently for "one of those little pick-me-ups Hans - and now - or we'll both be in Stalingrad next week!!!"

Over to the first shout of the 25 pdrs - as the first Allied asset is called in - things begin to get more interesting as the Allied gunners, fresh from some refresher training on the coast, plant some serious firepower onto the pre-arranged co-ordinates = right where the German CO has stalled his entire formation...had he managed to move at all, these shells would have just cratered some sand...as it was the strike hurt a bit but failed to kill any units. Still satisfying though!



The Axis forces are starting to gain some momentum on the flanks

Mid-game:

It was on the next turn that the FAO managed to pull down another salvo onto the same position, resulting in some serious hurt = the German CO here lost over half of his formation to 25 pdr fire in this turn....nasty! To add insult to injury, the next turn the Allied gunners pulled the same stunt, this time targetting and hitting the German armour threatening the BUA on the road-bend: net result = two half tracks OOA & everything else suppressed...The German HQ then followed this with a blunder which forced him to pull back away from his stranded formation...nice - nothing like leaving the boys in the lurch eh?!



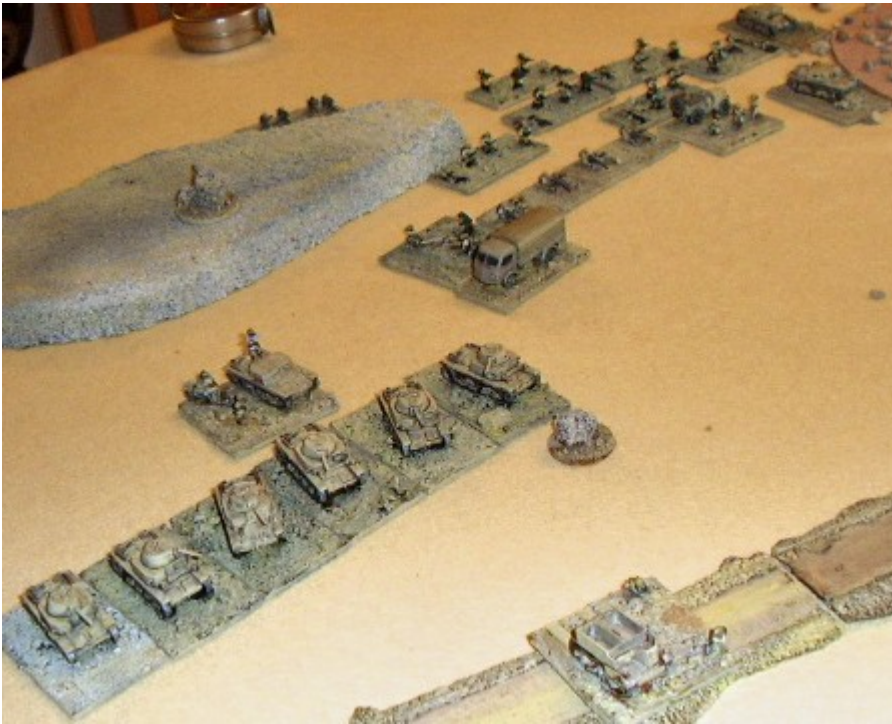
Result of some awesome gunnery...even if I do say so myself..

At this point things were decidedly ropey for the Axis - with the British gaining confidence and acquiring targets to good effect, the Italians maintained their advance but still hadn't managed to contact the enemy and the Germans had been hit badly and were hung up in a seriously stalled advance...what next? Well, this actually:



Blimey guv - it's a right pea-souper is this...

The hero of the hour steps up for the Axis - Gianluca the FAO having dashed far in advance to the unoccupied hill on the British left was able to call in a smoke barrage which enveloped not only the British CO including the main central stronghold, but, critically, the FAO on the next hill - on a roll of 5 it has to be said. To add insult to injury he managed to do the same on the next turn as well...



There he goes - off across the road to get to the hill...time for a smoke...



How am I supposed to see through that then eh?!?!

This proved to be decisive: with the threat of the 25 pdrs neutralised the Italians were able to regain momentum and continue their sweeping advance and the stalled Germans regained the initiative and moved up to the road.



Hmm...they're getting a bit close for comfort now...

After a couple turns of smoke, both HE and Stuka dive-bombing rained down on the oppressed British positions followed by close-range shelling of the Allied defences which started to take heavy casualties, accurate and well-targeted Axis fire doing-for the ATGs...

Getting serious now - this battle is in the balance...



Poised...

End-game:

The Italians start to advance much, much closer now - and with a command bonus they are able to move into excellent attacking positions, pouring fire into the Allied strongpoint in the table centre.



Avanti!!!

Bracing themselves, they prepare to storm the hills...but first, here comes this:



He really enjoys this y'know...!

As the Italians begin to loom ominously, the boys from Larkhill respond magnificently - in a truly awesome display of gunnery prowess they managed to reduce this command, with supporting fire from mortars & HMG, to one stand...lurvevly boys!!!



Brave British resistance...

By this point, though, the combined Italian & German armour is starting to really exert its influence and putting in some serious attacks - forcing the British onto break point.



German firepower concentrates on the hills to their front...just before the boys do the sensible-running-away-thing...

A couple of turns later and despite some truly courageous initiative fire from the remaining hilltop infantry onto the advancing armour, the Allies broke and ran - well, who wouldn't on a command roll at -5...?!?! Discretion at this point is **always** the better part of valour y'know...

The reckoning...

Allies: another great game, again played in the right spirit of the thing - lots of highs and lows, fast & furious as always - and plenty of cinematic, decisive moments. Defending against a Deliberate Attack is always a challenge but amazing fun and really rewarding...in the end the Axis infantry was decimated and plenty of support weapons taken out of action...and a **very** satisfying performance by my artillery. I think I did the sensible thing in taking no armour for this battle - although it would be interesting to see how this would play out with some highly-mobile firepower - think Crusader 6pdrs...hmmm...

Axis: When the British finally broke all the Axis armour was intact but virtually no infantry was left on the battlefield. Whilst it was a victory in that the British had been forced to withdraw, the Axis didn't have the required forces to secure the objective - and therefore withdrew to await reinforcements...

So - with both forces withdrawing to lick their respective wounds and regroup, the scene is set nicely for a Battle of Attrition over the village where these commanders first met...having resupplied and reinforced as much as they can...