



This SS soldier has found an American M1 Carbine.

Introduction

The Dulles Wargaming Club played a 54mm skirmish yesterday titled simply “Noville.” The action centered on this small town near the Ardennes during December of 1944. With no more than a squad per side, the full detail of Final Combat was available.

The Allied players, Peter and Glenn, had a team of eleven paratroopers from Easy Company, led by none other than Dick Winters. Winters’ character was generated with attention to his Leadership and Willpower attributes. The other characters were based on impressions from the HBO movie, Band of Brothers. For example, Shifty Powers had the highest Aim attribute.

The German players, Steve, Rich and James had twelve men, a Panther Ausf. G and a Schützenpanzerwagen Sd Kfz 251 half-track. Each side also had one mortar tube available per turn. The objective was simply to capture the church where the U.S. paratroopers had established a command post with observation. Each turn represented 12 seconds of real time. So, as the game began, the battle was on.



The command post straight ahead

Turn 1

The German player came in behind a cluster of hedges which concealed his movement from the Screaming Eagles. However, the half-track emerged into view and began to lay suppression fire on the steeple. Lt. Winters immediately spotted the vehicle and called in the 60mm mortar directly on the half-track. It would not fall until later in the turn.

The German infantry began to pour in from all directions. A few soldiers sought protection near the half-track. Seeing that they were near his artillery coordinate, he smiled to himself. The Germans found the deep snow an annoyance and their movement was severely hampered. Most of the turn was used to maneuver and acquire. With the exception of the half-track, no small arms fire was exchanged. Near the end of the turn, the U.S. 60mm mortar arrived. The deviation carried it beyond the hedge and it was hailed as a brilliant miss. The Germans sustained several casualties; most notable was the MG42 gunner on the half-track. Finally, the gun went silent.



The Germans begin their assault.

Turn 2

The U.S. artillery awakened the German players and they began a furious attack. As they slogged through the snow, an M1917 began to bark and two more German Grenadiers fell. A German sniper (pictured at the far left of the half-track) crept through the hedge and killed a U.S. Paratrooper with a well placed head shot. With ranges of no more than 75-yards, Lt. Winters could observe the entire area. He spotted the sniper and adjusted the 60mm mortar.

Seeing how successful the U.S. artillery was, the German players decided to take advantage of the "OBA" chit they just drew. The forward observer transmitted the coordinates and an 8.0cm projectile (actually 81.4mm) came crashing down to earth. Two Paratroopers were hiding in a hedge waiting to take a shot with the bazooka. They were killed by the blast and a third was wounded.

As the turn ended, both sides had taken casualties. This was going to be a bloody fight.



The Germans mean business.

Turn 3

Having lost an entire fire team to artillery, the German players decided to bring on their main asset, the Panther. The tank raked the church steeple with its coaxial and began turning its turret to meet the U.S. machine gun position. The slow turret rotation (6° per second) gave the U.S. players a chance to withdraw before the tank could fire its main gun. Anxious to bring the 7.5cm to bear, the Panther abandoned its idea and simply rotated the tank in place to quickly line up the target. The cannon roared to life and silenced the U.S. water-cooled Browning.

Two Paratroopers doubled back, anticipating the German exploitation of the situation. Sure enough, the Germans began to charge across the snowy road. They were cut down by a hail of small arms fire.



The last hope is this bazooka

Turn 4

The Paratroopers were hopelessly outclassed by the German tank. The half-track had been neutralized by Lt. Winter's well placed artillery, but the Panther was another matter. German counter artillery had killed the U.S. bazooka gunner, but another trooper picked up the weapon. He tried to remember his basic training, but without "skill" in that weapon, everyone knew his chances were *slim to none*.

By the time of the shot, the Panther presented a 45° angle. Even if the trooper managed to hit the beast, would it penetrate? This was the grand finale as there would be nothing the Paratroopers could do to combat the tank should this shot fail.

It would be a difficult shot even for an experienced gunner. Several trees obstructed the line of sight, but it was now or never. After all of the modifiers were calculated, Peter needed to roll a "1" on a D20. "Five percent chance," cried the German players. The room fell silent and Peter rolled the dice. He rolled a "20," the worst possible roll. The best he could hope for with the malfunction check would be that the weapon didn't fire, thus maintaining the security of his position. But as fate would have it, the weapon fired as normal and simply missed the target.

Recognizing the hopelessness of their predicament, the Paratroopers withdrew.

The Game Pieces

All of the miniatures are 1:30 scale by King & Country. The vehicles are made by Forces of Valor and the buildings are Conte Collectibles. The snow was created by stretching a bed sheet across four tables. The skirmish rules used are Final Combat by Britton Publishers.