

Final Combat (revisited) - The Complete Edition

Ben Lacy

&

WWII Eastern Front Skirmish Scenarios

By Andy Turlington

Britton Publishers

www.brittonpublishers.com

I have been in communication with Ben Lacy of Britton Publishers and Final Combat fame for many a year now. A fanatic about gaming, WWII and a good guy to boot he is the driving force behind Britton Publishers. Final Combat is a game I would love to play more, unfortunately a club set up with only a max of 3 hours to complete a game and not wanting to have the wargame loft at home out of action over a few games sessions means I don't get to play much. If you don't already know then Final Combat is basically WWII action taken to a role play level. It is a long game but not a game that bogs down and drags ... there is always something happening, it is just the action models a very short amount of real time. An exchange of fire scenario will last you a good 3-5 hours of play and at the end of it you will feel your squad has been in a fire-fight. The wooden cover 'you' are hiding behind is quickly disintegrating, dare you risk the sprint to dive over the harder wall. Are 'you' ever going to pop your head and Garand over the wall to see where the MG42 fire is coming from – 'hell no' not until someone calls up some heavy covering fire your not! My first piece of FC action ever was me 'seeing how realistic the rules really were' by having an MG42 open up on a squad gingerly advancing towards a Normandy building – well more than half the squad were down in less than a one phase (each turn in FC is a second) and the ones that made it to the nearby ditch were not coming out soon! Ok from then I went with the 'ultra realism' tag that Ben had given the rules, everything is 1:1 – want to know what the casualty zone of that grenade really is? Well put it like this your character better lob it quite a distance! A stray heavy mortar round once hit our 6x4 table, there were not many places to hide believe me. In my original review I did say everyone interested in WWII should have these rules for the information contained in them whether they ever get to play the rules or not – but then everyone should play the rules at some point for a 'reality check' at the very least!

Since then Ben has fine tuned the system even more – you still need to have excel running to help work through the modifiers (although to be fair most of the time you get to know if it is worth checking a roll or not) but the activation system now has a 'quick' version where you activate by skill level on a general basis, not pull out a chit and see which figure goes next. This speeds up play a great deal. The Complete version includes the out of print 'supplement' which had the original 'tweaks' and optional rules (like the activation system) as well as more data for some countries. The complete book now has no vehicle data sheets in it. For this you will need the 'Anthology of Armor'. This vehicle supplement has 195 vehicle data sheets inside its covers. Again the amount of detail that has been researched and collated here is frightening. If you are interested in WWII vehicles for ANY rules than this data alone is worth the asking price! A quick look at the homepage will reveal other goodies for purchase and download, scenario booklets and a new scenario book – 'Medal of Honor' where you can refight 12 scenarios which earned the soldiers concerned the Medal of Honor – can 'you' do as well. We will be looking forward to trying this one out in the office!

So basically if you had put off getting Final Combat for any reason the time has come when you can't hide any longer!

Which brings me to the latest book released from Britton –
WWII Eastern Front Skirmish Scenarios
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Contained within this 98 page perfect bound book is all the information you need to have to play 12 skirmish level games set on the Eastern Front during the course of the whole war. The action starts with Poland in 1939 and goes all the way to Königsberg in 1945. The book is geared to scenarios for the FINAL COMBAT set of rules although adequate conversion tables are present so you can convert the stats in the scenarios to 5 of the more popular skirmish rule sets. There is also enough information that I suspect it would be very easy to do stats for any set of rules of your choosing.

Each scenario gives:

Historical Situation – the background to the actual action of which the skirmish game is ‘part of’. All of the scenarios are based on historical occurrences in the ‘big picture’. The action takes place as a ‘piece’ of this big picture, often revolving around some key action.

Orders of Battle and Mission Briefing

Each side is given fixed number of troops and a mission briefing, what the orders are and how to achieve your objective. It is best if only one side is privy to their mission briefing.

A Map – Computer generated and like the rest of the inside of the book in B&W. The maps are grid based and most tables are large if you were to play in 28mm. The authors of Final Combat tend to use big tables and 28mm. You could of course use 15-20mm figures and the maps are rendered using 20mm as a guide, however most scenarios will need a large table (non of your 3’x3’ mini games here) ranging from 6x5 foot to 10x6 foot for 20mm. I tested the scenarios using 10mm single based figures and halved the board size.

Judges notes – Final Combat works best if you use a games-master and the scenarios are really geared for this. In this section they will find guidelines for running the game, how to keep it tense, when to divulge information etc. But don’t worry if you don’t use a GM – we ran a number of the scenarios using NUTS playing ‘single side’ against a defender on ‘automatic’ and with a bit of tweaking the scenarios ran smoothly and were fun to play. This section includes the ‘Special Scenario rules’, which cover a wide range of detail from special movement, artillery incoming, communications, special morale considerations etc.

Victory Conditions – Sometimes these are specific conditions that need to be met, sometimes they are a point based system.

The whole text is very easy and enjoyable to read and doesn’t bog you down in unnecessary detail like many scenario packs tend to do as a ‘filler’. However there is plenty of useful information to get your teeth into for each scenario which as a comparative ‘Eastern Front virgin’ was very useful indeed.

All in all a very useful addition to one’s library if you are interested in Eastern Front action.

Although a ‘skirmish’ book and a lot of people tend to think of Final Combat as ‘squad level’ a lot of the scenarios involve at least a platoon plus vehicles for each side. Many have at least 4-5 tanks and a couple of platoons involved on one side. So they would be suitable for rules where squads are in bases as well as individual figures, we even tested one of the scenarios using FOW as a ‘quick game’ which played well within an hour. If you are not already into the Eastern Front this book may help you spend even more money on our hobby! I can’t see why a majority of the scenario ideas would not ‘port’ across to the NW Front, certainly a couple of our play-tests were done using US forces. Even treated this way the book gives a number of interesting scenarios for one to play through. The only possible downside to the book that I could come up with was the actual time span of the scenarios – players may not be geared up for playing the ‘whole’ war equipment wise which

either means a few of the scenarios will not be playable OR as is more likely I suspect one will be so intrigued by the scenarios as to go out and buy the extra kit – now where is that credit card?

Rich Jones

May 2008