

Desert Sun – Blitzkrieg Commander battle report

1st May 2007: Nik & Dean, Taunton, Somerset

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

1500 points - Encounter

Scenario: It is late 1942 - advance battlegroups of the Italian army, supported by a small German contingent of DAK, and the 8th Army are approaching a village in the hours before dawn...as day begins to break recce patrols spot enemy activity and the columns deploy in battle order...The sun comes up and the first hazy light sees an awesome array of firepower approaching the village...



View from the British lines



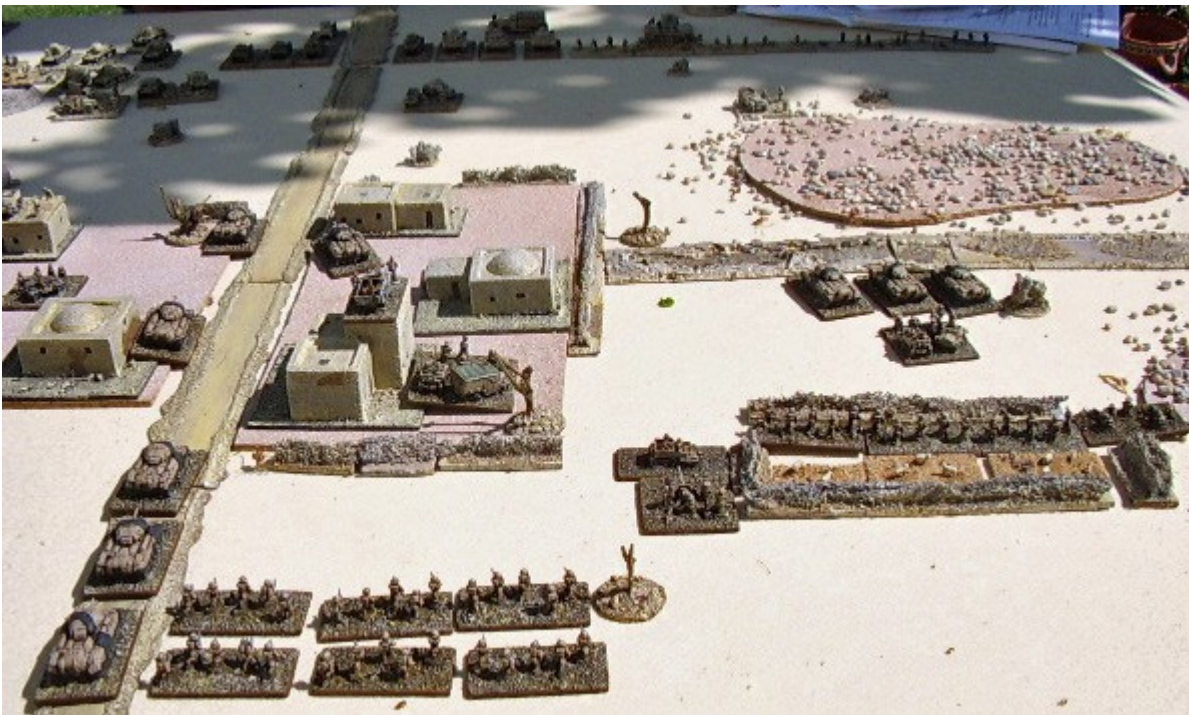
British battlegroup: L-R: Crusader 2pdrs, infantry & HQ, 6pdr ATG, FAO, Crusader 6pdrs, infantry & CO, Crusader 2pdrs, infantry, 6pdr ATG, HQ, HMGs, 25pdrs at rear



Axis battlegroup: L-R: Italian infantry with HMG, mortar & 47mm ATG, 75mm howitzers at rear, Italian armour - M13/40s & SPATs, German armour - PzIII, PzII, PzJagerI, 75mm infantry gun, recce, Italian infantry with HMG & 90mm ATG - note the 4-legged Axis mascot to the rear...

Early manoeuvring:

British: plan was to advance to contact as quickly as possible, taking control of BUA and sweeping advances on flanks, supported by HMG fire from the hill and artillery fire to disrupt and aggravate Axis advance. British advanced well to begin with on flanks but the centre stalled while the CO struggled to find the correct radio frequency...



British advance - infantry on right flank tend to the sheep...

Axis: The plan was for the right to advance and take the hill overlooking the BUA. The Germans to hold in the centre to reinforce success on the right or support the infantry on the left. The left flank was to advance to the dry stream bed hold and fix the British flank. Well that was the plan....



Axis commander begins his advance, eating his battle plan so it doesn't fall into enemy hands...

Mid-game:

British: continued advance aggressively, trying to occupy key ground and force enemy to come on...some successes with early firing but nothing decisive...Italians stubbornly refuse to move within range on their left flank where my forces are concentrated



British armour begins to take up position in the village

Axis: The left flank took 4 moves before they advanced any distance. By then the British infantry had moved

up across the dry stream and tried to engage my infantry - forcing the repositioning of the Germans to hold them back. The company of Pz III with the infantry gun moved across. British armour moved up and fired at the truck towing the infantry gun. It took 3 turns to kill that truck and the fire it drew allowed my Pz III to start taking out some armour. By the end I had lost 2 PZ III's the truck and one platoon of infantry as well as my recon.

British: Just at the *wrong* moment - before the assault onto the understrength Italian infantry - my HQ on the right flank blunders - and takes some serious fire, wiping him out...not good. The CO therefore had to reposition to take charge and try to restore order and maintain momentum. The Axis forces had other plans though...

Axis: Got their eye in here - command bonus results in lots of fire raining down on the now-stalled British advance...awesome display of accurate gunnery results in two thirds of the infantry wiped out, effectively smashing this flank and denying the Allies some soft targets...



Axis commander adopts the tried & trusted 'swatting' tactic...

Village fight:

British: With armour now in firing positions within the village the British thoroughly expected to dominate - and disrupt the Axis advance....but: ineffective firing and the unfounded fear of the infantry gun drawing fire meant that the Axis armour is largely left intact...plan starts to fall apart right about here...!

Axis: The centre developed differently to expectations - the village was occupied by British armour. I decided to fix them there and to sacrifice my PZ II in doing so. They with the PZJager I moved forward. They got support from the two Italian SPAT's. To my complete surprise I lost only one PZ II and one SPAT and the British lost the rest of their armour including some 6pdr Crusaders. I only expected them to last a couple of turns, so I was very lucky...



Look - burning armour...

Fighting in the hills:

British: With the artillery having proved an expensive use of points - that's an understatement right there - the HMGs occupying the high ground start to bring fire upon advancing Italian infantry who seem to be a bit more confident now...supported by infantry fire from positions occupied in the village, they see off some of the chocolate soldiers - who are melting a bit in the heat of battle...

Axis: The infantry and armour begin their advance, one infantry unit making it to the top of the hill before coming under heavy fire - although a strategically positioned flock of sheep absorbed a lot of rounds...this part of the battle saw the heaviest Axis losses as the 25 pdrs finally managed to get some rounds landing - this saw three infantry units wiped out...the only other artillery salvo saw off some Italian armour in the centre. The infantry then stalled trying to get onto the hill. Return fire saw the Italian support and armour rain fire onto the British infantry desperately trying to dig-in in the village, killing most of them.

End game:

British: The battlegroup has now reached break point - but stubbornly decide to fight on & try to see off the Axis advance. Again, some ineffective fire & manoeuvre but with very few units left and with little armour remaining - as in 1 tank! - the available options to the British commanders were somewhat limited - another understatement right there!

Axis: More successful commands from the Axis led to the final destruction of all British armour and another infantry unit...

British: job done - facing a break test on a 3 or under, the British decided that discretion at this stage was most definitely the better part of valour - and legged it...!



End game: view from Italian right flank - note the fluffy ablative armour on the hill...



End game: view from the Axis lines to the carnage in the village



End game: view from the British right flank - lots of smoke...those Crusaders burn well...



End game: view from Italian lines across the battlefield...carnage...lovely!

Conclusion:

British: A great game - really enjoyable against a great & very hospitable opponent. My cunning plan of occupying the village with armour - I know, I know, it's unorthodox! - really didn't work - although I was able to gain good fire zones and coverage, the actual firing left a lot to be desired...I took too much artillery and rendered them ineffective by trying to fire all 4 units at once greedy beggar that I am..! My advance on the right flank was going swimmingly until my HQ decided to go for a Burton...at which point it all fell apart really...Other mistakes I made included digging in too far back on the right for a couple of turns, including an ATG that was denied any half-decent fire arcs for half the game. Oh, and choosing Crusaders is clearly a mistake too..!

Axis: It was a very enjoyable game. I had some lucky throws. My Germans took a lot of fire and this enabled my weaker Italian tanks to survive. The fact my left flank only moved 10cm in the whole game meant Nik had to come to me. If he had got some more artillery strikes in it could have been very different as the one he did against my infantry did really hurt causing about a third of losses.

Next:

The British have fallen back to a defensive position in the hills and awaiting the advance of superior Axis forces - so 1000 points 8th Army defending against 2000 points Axis forces with reinforcements in a Deliberate Attack