

Desert Duel – Blitzkrieg Commander battle report

5th June 2007: Nik & Dean, Taunton, Somerset

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

Battle of Attrition: Axis 2000 points v Allies 2000 points

Scenario: It is later in 1942 and with these armies having battled through the Desert Sun and the Desert Hills they have spent time regrouping and rearming and are facing off across the village that was the site of their first encounter...

This one will be decisive and bloody with respective high commands urging their forces on the ground to push for the initiative in this critical phase of the desert war - there can be only one victor...



Allied deployment - right flank



Allies nicely dug-in on right flank



Allied deployment - left flank to centre armour



Allied deployment - look at all those Tommies in the centre



Axis deployment - infantry nicely dug-in



Axis deployment: Panzer group on right flank

Forces:**Allies:**

CO, 2 x HQ, FAO

12 Infantry

2 HMG

2 Mortars

2 6pdr ATG

4 x 25pdr artillery

6 x Crusader 2pdr

3 x Crusader 6pdr

3 x Grant (borrowed from Dean)

3 x Honey (IIRC? - borrowed these from Dean)

Plan - I get all impatient with these types of battles - and seeing Dean's deployment it was clear I would have to take the fight to him! So I thought I'd try to occupy the BUA with my infantry early on & see how he reacted...

Axis:

CO, 2 x HQ, FAO, FAC

5 Infantry (I can't believe I didn't notice this during the battle...I've reminded Dean that he needs to get more of his footsloggers into the firing line!)

HMG

Mortar

50mm ATG

88mm ATG

75mm infantry gun

20mm AA gun

9 x M13/40

1 x Marder

1 x PzIV

2 x PzIII 50mm long

5 x PzIII 50mm short

2 x 105mm howitzers

1 x 155mm howitzer

2 x Stukas

Plan - keep the infantry dug-in on the left flank with some attendant Italian armour for support together with the ATG & infantry gun. Remainder of the Italian armour to hold the centre and all the German armour deployed to the right flank. The left flank and centre would be the anchor for the Panzer advance on the right flank which would cut round the rear of the village and catch the British in the middle...

Early game:

The Allies took the initiative and began to advance rapidly - immediately threatening the centre with the advancing Grants (*well, they were on loan anyway so not too worried about blowing them up!*) moving swiftly down the road through the middle of the village, accompanied somewhat slower by units of Tommies making good use of the cover afforded by the desert buildings



Here we go lads: Grants move through the village supported by the infantry

At the same time I made the decision to redeploy my armour from the left flank to the right - so a traverse order took the Crusaders behind the village - figuring here that a refused flank here would frustrate the overwhelming Panzer group and make them chase the fight. I also moved my FAO to take up an advanced position on the roof of a village house with an awesome view of the Axis forces...



There they go: the Crusaders making their traverse behind the village to take up a position on the right flank

OK - so that's pretty much it for the Allies - some fast manoeuvre and re-positioning of forces (to the surprise of the Axis commander it must be said!) All ready for the next turn to begin unleashing hell (in the shape of four 25pdr batteries)...or so I thought - should have known better really, shouldn't I?

So - the first Axis turn - first dice rolled of the game for Dean successfully called in an artillery strike with the *stated* aim of suppressing the advancing Grants on the village road... a few rolls later & the barrage knocks out not only one of the tanks but annihilates my FAO!!! There was a good ten seconds of stunned disbelief as we looked...and looked...



The dead FAO is just out of shot to the right...not good...

Essentially this was crippling to me for the rest of the battle - four batteries of 25pdrs is a considerable points-sink and one which my battle plan pretty much depended on...that kind of disruptive fire - 12 attacks with 30cm fire zones - can be awesome and totally devastating...of course, with no-one to call down the fire, it's a good 340 points of worthlessness....

This completely changed the course of the battle and with no artillery support life was going to be *so* much sweeter for the Axis...

Just when I thought it couldn't get much worse, El Deano sends in the Stukas, the Italian armour opens up & suddenly there's only one Grant left...ho hum - I've been further behind and still lost as they say...



Swooping down out of the desert sun...

Mid-game:

The Axis armour began its advance on the right flank taking pains to avoid the fire zones of the Allied ATGs that remained there. Reaction from the British at this point was to continue the consolidation of forces over on the Allied right & begin the armour advance towards the wadi. Forces also began to regroup to form defensive positions at the rear of the village in preparation for the arrival of the Panzer group.

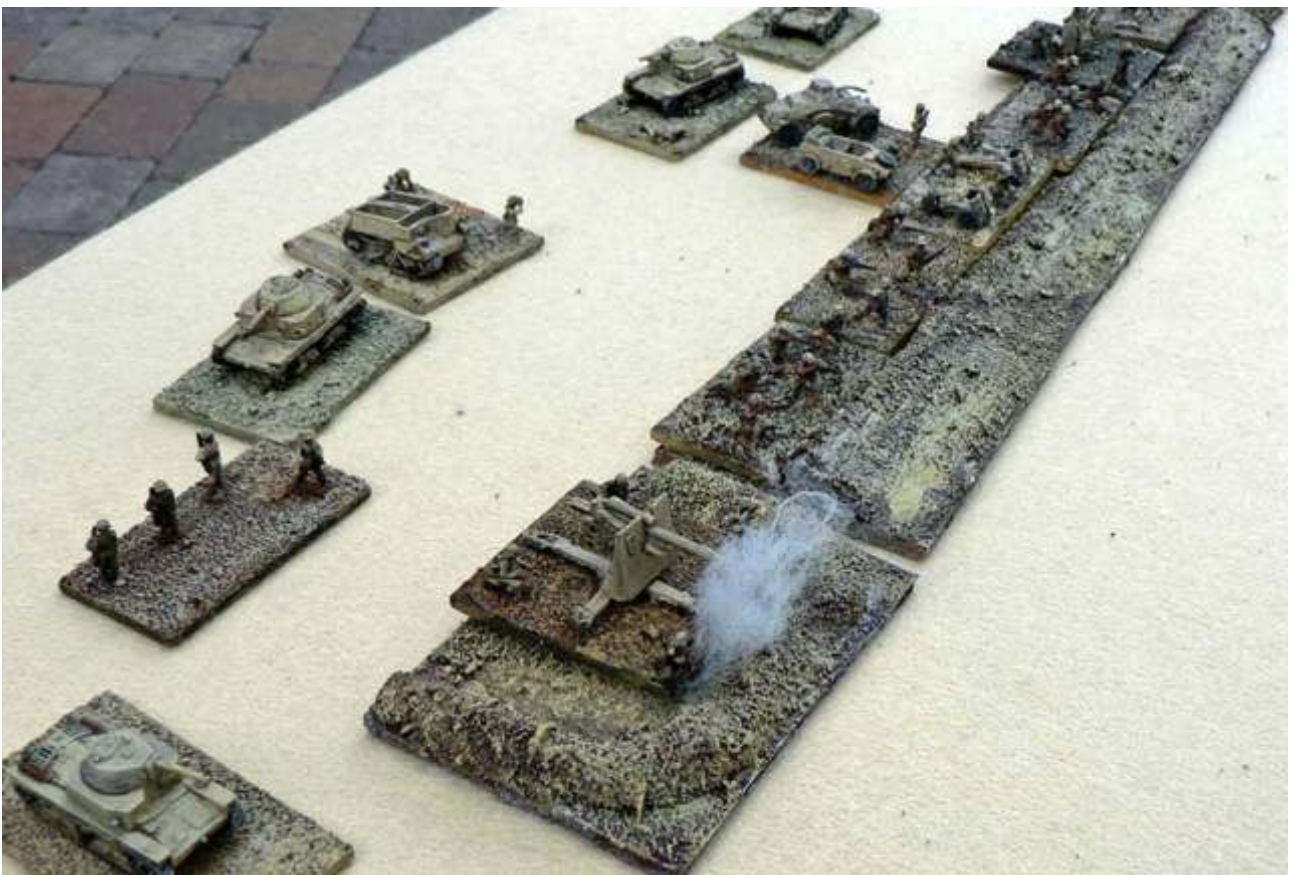


Allied infantry & armour in advance positions begin to take fire...



And take more fire...brave? foolhardy?

Some good exchanges of fire throughout the mid-game and hits are scored aplenty on both sides - with some damage from Axis anti-tank fire which proved surprisingly accurate, managing to knock out four tanks and suppressing another two - net effect is that the British commander becomes somewhat fixated on taking out the German ATGs at this point & gets a little sidetracked, swearing to wreak revenge! Worked though...



There y'go: one dead 88mm...now just got to worry about the rest!

Meanwhile those pesky sneaky Panzers are tiptoeing around the right flank being all cautious and everything...dunno why - I never worry too much about my tanks being cautious...oh, hang on a

minute...there might be something in this keeping-them-out-of-the-line-of-fire tactic y'know...



Sneaky Panzers sneaking...look at those brave Tommies manning the 6pdr...VCs all round I reckon...



That's better - some of them have become brave enough to sit on top of the hill...

Meanwhile, further exchanges of fire into and out of the village have not been kind to the Tommies...



Those red dice are suppression y'know...not good eh?

End-game:

From this point pretty much everything went according to plan for the Axis - on their left flank the continued British advance was met with fierce opposition which stalled it pretty effectively, enabling the Italian armour and German infantry to find a high degree of confidence and surge forward themselves, leaving the safety of their entrenched positions to finish things off



Look at those brave DAK sprinting out of the trenches!



View of decimated British forces on this flank with German infantry advancing to a holding position

Meanwhile, over on the Axis right flank the Panzers made short work of the gallant ATG defenders and the remaining Crusaders with some excellently targeted fire - having surrounded the village the attack was hard-pressed and ultimately was pretty swift in forcing the Allied surrender.



Panzer assault takes care of the defensive Crusaders at the village road...



...and consolidates to concentrate fire into the village and the holed-up Tommies in there...



Rommel watches with pride as his beloved armour pounds the village finally forcing the surrender...

The final reckoning:

Well, another great battle although it has to be said that the loss in Turn 1 of the British FAO effectively killed the game and meant that I was holding out desperately against the odds to try & force the draw really...although of course I got pretty bored of this & therefore went on the foolish advance on the right flank hoping to at least get somewhere near the Axis breakpoint...didn't happen:

Net losses to Axis were 4 Italian M13/40 tanks, the 88mm ATG and the 75mm infantry gun....

Net losses to Allies? Lots of burning tanks...'nuff said...

