

The German Dilemma

by Norman Beveridge

Having played LUFTWAFFE enough times to know just about what happens in most cases, I find one aspect of the game quite distressing. Note that I speak here of the Advanced and Tournament versions, possibly including the random optional critical industry rule. The problem: The Germans must attack escorting U.S. fighters before going after the bombers. I have noticed several articles in the General criticizing this rule as unrealistic, and I hereby want to criticize it as forcing the German player into a decisive strategy.

What do I mean by a decisive strategy? I mean that in the Tournament version this rule forces the German into a winning strategy. He can ignore the bombers altogether, since he is forced to attack the escorts before going after the bombers. The rule prevents the German from stopping most raids near the R line, and gives him only a small chance of stopping the bombers short of Berlin. But since many targets lie far beyond Berlin, the German can let those targets near the R line go, and clobber the fighters. After a few very successful raids the U.S. player has no more fighters to speak of, and thus has no chance to hit targets beyond Berlin. The German wins because he is forced to do so. The same can happen in the Advanced game, except it usually takes an extra raid to kill off all the replacements for the U.S. fighters (the Germans get more planes to defend with, but the U.S. player gets about twice as many replacements). Now, a slightly different thing happens if the critical industry rule applies against the Germans. If the German draws an industry with a large number of targets, like rails or oil, then the original case applies, and almost invariably the German wins. But if he draws one with only a few targets ' such as chemicals or steel, then the German has no hope. Chemicals targets disappear early, with little loss to the U.S. player. Since the German must take on the escort first, the U.S. player can get through to all the chemical and most of the steel targets in the first four or five quarters. The German may as well be defenseless. This means that without a critical industry, you may as well give the game up to the German, but with it, the game is virtually decided before the game begins. Of course I over-emphasize the imbalance a bit, but most veteran players remember the horrible imbalance of Midway. Further, the trend today is towards play balance, and obviously something is missing here. Perhaps some wily players have cunning strategies that disprove my point, but it' so, neither I nor the General have heard from you.

What I suggest involves suspending that unrealistic and decisive rule and adding a few others:

- IV. Ignore the rule forcing the German player to attack escort fighters before he attacks the bombers.
- V. The German may choose to attack either the escorts or the bombers or both. If he chooses to attack the fighters, play goes on as usual. If he decides to attack both, he must of course attack the fighters first and clear them away before he goes after the bombers, as in the regular

rules. But if the German decides to go after the bombers and ignore the escort, then

VI. Follow the following procedure.

- A. The German announces his intention of going after the bombers first, and indicates which aircraft will do so.
- B. The U.S. may attack those German aircraft. He may ignore all E ratings in making the attack, no matter what the U.S. or the German planes are.* Roll the attack as if it were a normal fighter combat with equal E ratings. Extract the losses from the German fighters before they may attack the bombers.
- C. If the German fighters attack after dropping their tanks, then the U.S. aircraft must also drop tanks if they wish to attack the Germans as described in case (b) above.
- D. The Germans may then attack the bombers freely with anything they have left. Of course, if any bombers get shot down, then the bombers may return fire.
- E. The only exception to rule (b) is German jets and rocket aircraft. These aircraft may freely ignore any escort aircraft and attack the bombers at will. If a combined group of German jets and other aircraft attack the bombers, the escort may attack only the non-jet aircraft.

These same rules may apply to U.S. aircraft making strafing runs on German airbases.

The reasoning behind these rules should baffle no one. First, we already know that the Germans could and in fact did ignore the escorting aircraft. Second, the escorts would have no trouble setting up for the kill since the German aircraft would have to make fairly limited passes on the bombers to shoot them down. The E ratings apply to dogfighting characteristics., which hardly apply to a driving pass or a head-on run on a big bomber. Third, with the tanks on, a plane is a good bit slower and less maneuverable than with them off. This may seem to contradict my previous idea about the E ratings. But the key to the German attack on bombers was speed - not only to get past the escorts, but also to set up on the bombers. Remember, the bombers had very good defensive weapons. Fourth, the jets could set up and get out so quickly that no U.S. fighter could touch them. I understand that more of the jets crashed during the war for mechanical failures and pilot errors than got shot down. Fifth, the only real chance the U.S. escorts would have on the German attackers, perhaps fortunately, would occur before the Germans made their run, i.e. while they tried to set up. Therefore the Germans take casualties *before* they attack, and take none after, despite the fact that they would have to fly through the escort to get away again.

I have used this method in several games recently, and it works quite well and makes for some very interesting air battles. The German can protect a critical industry if he must, but of

Course the price is high. If lie need not, lie can go back to his old strategy of eating up the U.S. fighters, which leaves the U.S. player on the short end again. This brings me to my next rule change:

Using the critical industry rule, divide the industries up into two categories according to how many targets exist and how easily the U.S. player can get to them. I do it as follows:

Gp	industry	Targets
L	Rail Center	20
L	Oil Refineries	17
L	Steel	4
L	Chemicals	6
S	Shipping	9
S	Ball Bearings	5
S	Transportation	8
S	Armaments	7

Gp. means group, in which L means means small. When the German draws his critical industry, follow this procedure: First, lie draws from all eight types. If the first draw is a large industry, then lie draws no more. If lie draws oil as his large industry, then follow the rule limiting the number of German aircraft in the air, which is the first play balance rule listed. If, however, the German draws a small industry for his first draw, lie must choose again. The second draw comes only from the small industries. In effect, the German either gets one large critical industry, or two small ones. Now, when the U.S- player eliminates one of the small industries, the Luftwaffe is grounded for one full quarter. The German may delay any reinforcements and defer any replacements lie wishes, but all other units must appear somewhere on the board. In the next quarter, all aircraft may fly as usual. When the second small industry is eliminated, or when the large industry is eliminated, the Luftwaffe is grounded permanently as in the regular rules

If you still find the game balanced in favor of the Germans, then do not allow him to look into the U.S. stacks until lie attacks them. All the German gets to know is whether there are fighters or bombers or both in the stack. After lie attacks them, he may freely inspect them at any time.

I have found that the rule allowing the German to go after the bombers gives the U.S. player a psychological lift! Without it, the German accuimitates replacements at a ridiculous rate, often coming to 45 or more by the end of the fifth quarter. But when the German has to go after the bombers first, the U.S. player puts a few dents in that replacement pool, and things do not look so bad.

Some players may think that once the U.S. player knows lie is about to eliminate a critical industry (desperate attacks on bombers in ignorance of the escort usually gives it away) the U.S. player may forget about escorting the bombers, since they will get shot up anyway, and that lie should use his fighters to hunt down the enemy's own squadrons. That situation would of

course be unrealistic, but I have found that the U.S. player often profits more from committing his fighters to escort duty at Such a time, since only escorting fighters get in a shot at the attackers. This especially holds in the advanced game, with overrun attacks by fighter units. Also, the escorts can get in two licks on the Germans; one during the pass at the bombers, and another when the U.S. planes get their own move. As per the rule that I did not change, once the bomber group gets into a battle with the German fighters, tile escorts may break away. So this rules change can have a great effect on German casualties.

I know this may meet with much criticism, but I believe these changes are both realistic, and necessary.

*The escorting fighters remain in the square with the bombers.