

## Naval Warfare Simulations'

# Naval Warfare World War I

Published in 2003 • Designed by Christopher Dean

reviewed by Patrick R. Collins

It's hard to review a game with a mouthful of a title. It still is, as *Naval Warfare World War I* doesn't roll off one's mouth any easier than *Naval Warfare World War II*. That's still okay, because sorting this out is about the most complex thing about this game.

*Naval Warfare World War I* is a game covering all aspects of naval warfare in World War I, not just surface actions. It comes with scenarios for the Baltic, Pacific, Mediterranean, as well as North Sea. Navies present include the British, German, French, Italian, Russian, and Austrian-Hungarian (cheers from Virginia Beach). Other navies will be covered in a planned expansion. The game also gives you generic land fortifications, guns, and army units to shell, bomb, and otherwise annoy. And, of course you get a full flotilla of merchants for your destructive pleasure, along with a generous selection of planes. And I ought to mention the wide array of marking cards you also get. Cards? Yes, cards. For that is the really unique thing about the *Naval Warfare* series of naval games. While it has counters and hex maps, the engine is in the cards.

*Naval Warfare World War I* is a game that lets you fight out fleet actions of World War I. Many naval games focus on battles with a limited number of ships, but in a detailed manner. *Naval Warfare World War I* lets you play out the larger fleet actions, in a way that keeps the detailed flavor, yet is playable in a regular gaming session. It's also very usable by miniatures players. It could be used as a miniatures rule set as is. The key to how it works is the card system.

Each card represents one ship, or one squadron if planes. The cards have an attractive side view of the units in question. They are also packed with information. Ships have ratings for their main and secondary batteries (and penetration of same) anti-aircraft guns (area and point) torpedoes, armor, speed, size, as well as anti-submarine warfare, if those items are present. Naval buffs will greatly appreciate that each ship's data card has a date, to reflect the refit that the card represents. Ships have four damage levels, and the card has reduced or eliminated values for certain items at each damage level.

Plane cards are similar, but reflect air combat strength, defense, anti-submarine warfare, and weapons load out if it's capable of carrying any. The card also lists how many planes the card represents. This card also has four damage levels, along with how many planes are represented at each damage level. So a squadron of Short 74s has four planes when fresh. At the third damage level it has three, and then one before being eliminated. Squadron sizes are smaller, when compared with World War II versions. Submarines are similar to ships, but have reload information, as well as surfaced/submerged speed and defense values. Land units are rather similar to ship cards, but do not move. They are also rather generic, and not specific to any

one nation in the game.

There are a host of marker cards that make actual play very easy and intuitive. There are division/squadron cards to note that units are together. Planes have weapon load out cards, and these are numbered. You won't have to remember how many attacks your bombers have. There's a card for that. There are additional units cards, in case you need sixteen L Class destroyers instead of the two cards provided. There are also cards to mark a division spotted, in smoke, in column, or evading. Best of all are the plastic clips you get. These are yellow, orange and red. You place these on units as they are damaged, to mark what level they are at. The cards also have reduced levels for certain values, so you can easily use your new (reduced) capabilities. In some cases damage is simultaneous, so you place the damage clip on the bottom of the card, until you've fired, then move it to the top. Simple and clever.

The *Naval Warfare* series are really four games in one. The tactical game is used for surface action, which also includes anti-submarine warfare games. The scale here is two nautical miles per hex; a turn is ten minutes. A ship may move one hex per turn for each twelve knots she has in speed. The strategic game uses twenty nautical miles per hex, and one turn is one hour. This is used for games with any sort of air search, battles that are strictly air strikes, and really large surface actions. A ship may move one hex per turn for each twenty knots of speed she has. There are basic games for both the tactical and strategic scales. These use range bands instead of hex maps. The bands are short, medium and

long, which cover zero to twelve miles in the tactical game, zero to 150 in the strategic. Game turns are six hours in the basic, strategic game.

I greatly like the differing scales, and the idea of basic and advanced games. The basic game is very suitable to learn the system, or for using with novices to gaming, or to naval gaming. You then build on that for the advanced game. Or not, as you choose. I find that the basic game gives enough tactical detail to let you feel you are fighting a fleet, while letting you actually have a fleet sized force in action. I personally would only use the advanced system for smaller actions. While this game plays fast anyway, the basic game really makes things move by cutting down on maneuver, and simplifying search. It's quite easy to move even the largest fleet from one large box to another. Also, for large fleet actions, you move divisions by range band. Moving sixteen destroyer counters across a hex map is no joke. But moving a division of cards one range band is trivial. This feature of the system makes gaming really BIG battles practical for an average gaming session. For me this is a very appealing aspect of the system. When you add in the free computer gaming aide, you can realistically hope to game out those huge scenarios in *Great War at Sea*, and not get divorced in doing it.

BB (GE)		KONIG		PV = 12			
		1 9 1 5					
MB-AP	7-2	2-1	SB-AP				
AA	1-x	1-0	TB-AP				
TT	5-1-4	x	ASW				
DEF	7	0	SIZE				
ARMOR	3	3	SPEED				
Damage Levels							
	MB	SB	TB	AA	ASW	TT	SPD
L	6	2	1	1-x	x	5-1-3	2
M	4	2	1	0-x	x	3-1-3	2
H	3	1	1	x	x	1-1-3	1

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While one does not think of naval aviation in World War I, in fact there was many an experiment: seaplane carriers, floatplanes, something that looks like a bi-plane PBY, and of course airships. You get lots of different planes and zeppelins. And planes from multiple countries are covered as well. They've even included rules for when the Royal Air Force gets incendiary bullets for zeppelin hunting. The components may be desk-top published quality, the research and attention to detail is not.

Combat in *Naval Warfare World War I* is done by comparison of die rolls. Each side rolls a die, adds various modifiers, then subtracts the two. The difference between attacker and defender determines the damage level, if any, the target receives. It's simple, but the various combats do have different modifiers. This does add up to a fair amount of dice rolling. But the team at Naval Warfare Simulations has thought of that. They have a combat assistant program that runs on any flavor of Windows. This is very simple to use. Pull down menus are available for the various possible modifiers for surface, antiaircraft, air to surface, torpedo, antisubmarine warfare, as well as multiple attacks. Using this really moves a game along. *Naval Warfare World War I* also uses the same mechanism for air strikes on land, and air combat.

*Naval Warfare World War I* lets you play submarine versus convoy games in a satisfactory manner. Submarines may be attacked when submerged only by units with anti-submarine warfare capability, and then only if in the same hex. Since submarine torpedoes have a two hex range, a convoy can suffer attack from out of the blue. The rules provide for plotting movement for submarines, while ships move on the map. This works, since an in hex attack can yield a result of damage to a submarine, or detection, or no detection at all. If you have an opponent you trust, letting him resolve all combats could provide a very interesting experience. You'd have attacks happen on your convoy, attack a hex, and see what result you got. You might be hitting empty ocean, or may have the right hex, but failed your detection roll. It's hard to get a better simulation without a referee.

Tactical games are handled as follows:

- Spotting, check for misidentification.
- Allocate fire to targets. A maximum of five units may attack a single enemy.
- Movement
- Resolve gunnery, then torpedo attacks. Add damage clips at the bottom of cards
- Move damage clips to the top of cards to indicate the new damage level.
- Ships may be detached from divisions, smoke may be laid. The smoke blocks only one enemy division.
- End of turn. The game ends if no divisions are spotted for three turns.



While combat is resolved in much the same way as other types of combat (attacker's modified die roll versus defender's modified die roll), some of the things that modify combat may be of interest. These

are: crew quality, radar class, range, and armor vs. penetration for gunnery. Torpedo modifiers are crew quality, speed, range to target, and evasion. In World War I, all navies may have dud torpedoes.

There are also rules to allow solitaire play. You chose the type of game you wish to play: interception, bombardment, convoy, or amphibious landing. Then, using the solitaire chart you roll a die and find the enemy's reaction. There are separate sheets for tactical and strategic games. These are, as you might imagine, somewhat mechanical. Yet they do provide a reasonable game. The rules cover how much force is used, and what the targets are. They do a good job, and could be adapted to other naval systems, with a little work.

Last are the scenarios, and campaign rules. Scenarios are rather straightforward, and come in North Sea, Baltic, and Mediterranean flavors. Twenty scenarios, with a few set outside the three main areas. Most are historical, a few are what if. The serious naval gamer will probably be most interested in the campaign rules. They place you in command of a theater, let you choose (to an extent) your forces from those historically available, and have at it.

You may choose from the Baltic, North Sea, or Mediterranean. You then select the length of campaign. This determines how many battles (campaign turns) you fight. The possibilities range from one to two, to two to four. You select missions for each battle, and then assign your forces to their missions for that first battle. Then you find out what sort of pre-battle intelligence you have. After this, you may make some changes to your forces, but at a victory point cost. You then fight out the first battle. I should point out that you can have multiple missions per battle (probably campaign turn is a better term). After the first mission is resolved, you go to the next one. Damaged ships may be repaired, at a victory point cost and cost in time as well. You then repeat these steps for the rest of the battles in the first campaign turn. You then repeat the above for each campaign turn. Compare victory point ratios, and consult the table to see if you what level of victory you won.

CL(GE)		MAGDEBURG					
PV = 3		1 9 1 2					
							
MB-AP	3-0	X	SB-AP				
AA	X	X	TB-AP				
TT	2-1-4	X	ASW				
DEF	3	2	SIZE				
ARMOR	1	4	SPEED				
Damage Levels							
	MB	SB	TB	AA	ASW	TT	SPD
L	3	x	x	x	x	2-1-3	3
M	2	x	x	x	x	1-1-3	2
H	1	x	x	x	x	x	1
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The appeal of this system is that while you have great latitude in how you fight, you must conserve your ships (turn tail, sometime) and worry about repairs. The variety of missions, times of day, and weather also make the actual fighting interesting. The drawback is that even a small campaign of three turns could easily eat up two full weekends. But for some that's an appeal. They will like the linked campaigns even more. Here, you start in one theater, and when the time rolls around for another theater to begin, you play that also. Here, the British player may move forces from one theater to the other, but the German may only send units to the Mediterranean at the game's start. While the British player is allowed to send units to the Baltic, I don't find this at all realistic, and would not allow it. Unlike *Naval Warfare World War II*, you may not transfer repair points from one theater to the next.

There is one aspect of this game that may put off some gamers. This is too bad, as it's a unique and flexible system. I'm referring to the components. First, you get a LOT of them. 530 ship cards, more than eighty plane cards, thirty-six land cards, 180 various marker cards, seven maps (8" x 11"), two hundred counters, ninety damage clips, and a number of player aid/quick reference cards. The seven maps

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cover historical situations (like Heligoland Bight) as well as some generic and open ocean maps. You should be able to fight out most battles using these maps. And I didn't mention the fifty page rule

book! But quantity certainly is not the problem.

The issue may be that, the maps and counters are high quality desk-top published. They are not die cut, but need to be cut out. (Caveat lector - I greatly prefer this, as it's easy to use a paper cutter.) They represent ship divisions, plane squadrons, airbases, and markers for divisions. They are at the standard of Simulation Workshop's counters, or Rob Markham's' early games (like *Montcalm & Wolfe*). The maps (all of them) are at the same standard as the counters. They are printed using a high end personal computer type printer. Neither the

counters nor the maps use the high gloss finish often found in war-games. The cards are not laminated, either, but are printed on a heavy cardstock. They have held up very well to my repeated playings. Naval Warfare Simulations has switched to black and white on the cards to cut costs. I do wish that color cards for ships and planes were available as a higher priced option. They look so nice! The cards have a very nice side view of the unit in question. You can easily cover the name, and identify the ship or plane if you know your types! Maps are mounted; counters are not. One big issue is that the hexes on the strategic maps aren't big enough to allow counters to be side by side. On the tactical maps this isn't really an issue, if your ships are that close it's over anyway. But on the strategic maps, it's a problem. I ended up using a Chessex mat for testing. In the World War II version the issue isn't so apparent, as even strategic battles usually have forces more than one hex apart. I also wish *Naval Warfare World War I* provided a listing of the player aid charts in the rules. You get so many, it's easy to be unsure if you have them all or not.