

Naval Warfare Simulations'

Naval Warfare World War II

reviewed by Patrick R. Collins

It's hard to review a game with a mouthful of a title. I'm going to refer to this game as *Naval Warfare* throughout the review. It takes me having to type out "Naval Warfare Simulations: Naval Warfare World War II" or you having to read the awful jumble *NWS:WW WWII*. And that's good, because sorting this out is about the most complex thing about this game.

Naval Warfare is a game covering naval warfare in World War II. All aspects of naval warfare, not just surface actions or carrier battles. Not just one ocean, or theater. Think of any action where a navy was in action, and you can game it out with this system. Navies present include the US Navy, Royal Navy, Imperial Japanese Navy, Kriegsmarine, Regia Marina, French Marine, Soviet, Dutch, Danish, and Australian navies with some Norwegians and Polish planes thrown in for good measure. 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 enough planes to darken the widest sky. And I ought to mention the wide array of marking cards you also get. Cards? Yes, data cards. For that is the really unique thing about *Naval Warfare*. While it has counters and hex maps, the engine is in the data cards.

Naval Warfare is a game that lets you fight out fleet actions of World War II. Many naval games focus on battles with a limited number of ships, but in a detailed manner. *Naval Warfare* 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. In fact, it could be used as a miniatures rule set as is. The key to how it works is the data card system.

Each data 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 and radar, if those items are present. *Naval Warfare* also distinguished between search and fire control radar. Naval buffs will greatly appreciate that the 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, radar, 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 Wildcats has twenty-four planes when fresh. At the third damage level it has twelve, and then six before being eliminated. 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 generic, and not nation specific.

There are a host of "marker cards" that make actual play very easy and intuitive. There are division/squadron cards to note which units are together. Planes have weapon load out cards, and these are numbered. You won't have to remember how many attacks your dive-bombers have. There's a card for that. There are additional unit cards, in case you need five *Fletcher*-class destroyers instead of the four 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. They also mark a "split squadron". So if you wish to keep twelve Wildcats on combat air patrol while twelve go with the strike, you get two fighter cards, and place an orange clip on each. 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.

Naval Warfare is really four games in one. The tactical game is used for surface action, which also includes anti-submarine warfare games. The scale here is each hex is two nautical miles at ten minutes a turn. 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 carrier battles, 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 eighteen miles in the tactical game, zero to 275


in the strategic. Game turns are six hours in the basic, strategic game.


You might ask why four systems? Or, why basic and advanced? Surely we grognards will only want to play advanced, right? 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. Another answer lies in speed of play. 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. The basic game's search is slightly more complex, yet still realistic.


Carrier search is the bane of many a naval game. Calling out hexes for your planes to search on a double blind board gives some information as to the location of the searchers, especially if only short ranged naval planes are in play. Simulations Workshop's *Solomon Seas* introduced the innovative search scheme based on "pre-ploting" the search pattern at the beginning of a day. *Naval Warfare* uses a more basic approach. The idea is the more planes searching, the greater your probability of finding something. For each three search planes, you can try to detect one division. Specialized planes like patrol, scout, or recon have a greater chance than fighters/dive-bombers. You roll a die, and see if you've spotted the target division. It's not entirely satisfactory as you can try to find the most dangerous division multiple times. But your chances of spotting depend entirely on how many planes you allocate, and it certainly gives historical results. Some groups are found, others are not. You may have your combat air patrol try to find the enemy scouts as well! The advanced

CV		AKAGI		Jun-1948	
AA	3-2	2-0		SB-AP	
AA	5-2	X		ASW	
AIRGROUP	3	X		RADAR	
DEF + TPS	8+1	0		SIZE	
ARMOR	2	5		SPEED	
DAMAGE LEVEL					
LET	2	4-2	X	2	+1
MOD	2	3-1	X	2	4
	1	1-1	X	1	3

Fighter						
Oct-1942						
29 x Ki-43 'Oscar'						
						
ATA	5	4-5-2	BOMBS			
RADAR	X	X	TORPS			
DEF	7	X	RCKTS			
		(X)	ASW			
STRENGTH/LEVEL						
#	ATA	B	T	R	ASW	DEF
15	4	3	X	X	X	6
3	2	X	X	X	X	5
2	1	X	X	X	X	4
1	2	X	X	X	X	3

Torpedo Bomber						
Oct-1943						
29 x B2N 'Jill'						
						
ATA	3	4-5-3	BOMBS			
RADAR	X	4-5-4	TORPS			
DEF	8	X	RCKTS			
		(X)	ASW			
STRENGTH/LEVEL						
#	ATA	B	T	R	ASW	DEF
15	2	3	X	X	X	7
1	2	X	X	X	X	6
1	1	X	X	X	X	5
1	1	X	X	X	X	4

Medium Bomber						
Apr-1941						
12 x G4M1 'Betty'						
						
ATA	4	4-6-3	BOMBS			
RADAR	X	4-3-4	TORPS			
DEF	6	X	RCKTS			
		(X)	ASW			
STRENGTH/LEVEL						
#	ATA	B	T	R	ASW	DEF
9	3	3	X	X	X	5
2	2	X	X	X	X	4
1	1	X	X	X	X	3

Patrol						
Jul-1941						
4 x H8K1 'Emily'						
						
ATA	3	4-2-2	BOMBS			
RADAR	X	4-2-4	TORPS			
DEF	6	(7)	RCKTS			
		(X)	ASW			
STRENGTH/LEVEL						
#	ATA	B	T	R	ASW	DEF
3	2	3	X	X	X	5
2	1	2	X	X	X	4
1	1	X	X	X	X	3
0	1	X	X	X	X	2

game lets units spot based on their proximity. You are assured a spot if you're in the same hex, the chance gets less if you're one or two hexes away. Radar spots automatically and at longer ranges. Also, if you have fire control radar you can fire (somewhat less accurately) without visual spotting. The advanced game brings out the differences between units, plane types, and even navies. While the above comments apply to the strategic game, the tactical game also follows the same pattern. Let me now show how Naval Warfare Simulations portrays various actions.

Combat in *Naval Warfare* 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 target receives. It's simple, but the various combats have different modifiers. Also, often you roll dice to see if you hit, then you dice to see what damage, if any is done. This does add up to a fair amount of dice rolling. But the team at *Naval Warfare* 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, anti-aircraft, air to surface, torpedo, antisubmarine warfare, as well as multiple attacks. Using this really moves a game along. I was able to play a lot more scenarios using this aide than I could have otherwise. It also has some sound effects to put you in the proper frame of mind. Highly recommended. *Naval Warfare* also uses the same mechanism for air strikes on land, and air combat.

Carrier combat is an important part of any naval World War II game. The sequence of play is particularly important, so I'll set it out here for both the basic game and the advanced. The basic game isn't quite as basic as the name implies.

- Basic**
- Allocate squadrons to air searches.
 - Allocate squadrons to combat air patrol
 - Air strikes are now launched against targets spotted the turn before, OR spotted at the scenario's start. The strikes now attack their target. Combat air patrol engages fighter escort now, combat is simultaneous. Combat air patrol may then attack bombers, but the bombers fire at the fighters first, then the combat air patrol may attack. Squadrons then attack their targets, one squadron at a time. Anti-aircraft fire is resolved against the attackers. All ships in the division may fire their area anti-aircraft factors, only the target may fire its light anti-aircraft factor. Only then may any survivors make their attack. After all attacks are resolved, all aircraft from both sides return to base. A maximum

of six squadrons may attack one division.

- Search missions are now resolved. Reconnaissance aircraft have the best chance, bombers less, and fighters are worst of all. Place a spotted card on any spotted division.
- Divisions may close the range by one band now.
- You may attempt to open the range from any spotted division now.
- If any division is at short range, it may try to have surface combat with enemy divisions. It must spot them however as per tactical spotting rules. The target of this attack may try to intercept with any of its divisions that are at short range. Interception means that the new division engages in target with the aggressor division. Else the original target is engaged. Any surface battles are resolved prior to continuing.
- End of turn. Search planes return now. Any spotted divisions may roll to see if they stay spotted. Every third and fourth turns are night turns.

Advanced

- Spotting. This is resolved by different rules than in the basic game. There is a search table where the prior intelligence you have affects your chance to find a division, as does number of planes searching.
- Combat. Units in the same hex fight. Surface ships fight six turns of advanced tactical combat. Air strikes are also resolved.
- Movement. Planes are launched now. Any ships may move, as may planes in the air. Planes have a radius in hexes. Once they moved that far, they must land at a base within that range, or they are lost.
- Arm squadrons. Planes are launched next turn.
- Aircraft recovery. Planes in the same hex as a base/carryer may land. Landing planes have ordnance markers removed.
- End of game turn.

The difference to account for hex movement versus range bands is interesting. I don't think the "basic" game is less interesting. It does play faster, but also uses simpler rules, spotting being different, and adding rules for changing ordnance loads and special damage to carriers with armed planes.

One type of naval warfare not well covered in other games is antisubmarine warfare. *Naval Warfare* lets you play convoy games in a satis-

factory manner. You could even use this system to move a convoy from Halifax to England, gaming out various wolf pack attacks along the way. 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 three 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 will also show why light carriers were so useful to the allied effort. The extra help from aircraft makes anti-submarine warfare much more effective.

Tactical games are handled as follows:

- Spotting, check for misidentification.
- Allocate targets to fire at. 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 maybe 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 vs. defender's modified die roll), some of the things that modify combat maybe of interest. These are: Crew quality, radar class, range, and armor versus penetration for gunnery. Torpedo modifiers are crew quality, speed, range to target, and evasion. Some navies may have dud torpedoes, depending on the year of the scenario.

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, better than some computer games I've played!

Last are the scenarios, and campaign rules. Scenarios are rather straightforward, and come in Pacific, North Atlantic, and Mediterranean flavors. There are also a few Arctic battle scenarios. Twenty four, in all. They cover all the battles you'd expect, plus four "could have been" battles. The serious naval gamer will find the campaign rules far more interesting. 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 South Pacific, North Atlantic, or Mediter-

anean. You then select the length of campaign. This determines how many battles (campaign turns) you fight. The possibilities range from one to two, to three to five. You select missions for each battle, 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, again 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.

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. You too can decide if *USS Wasp* and *USS Washington* are more useful running planes to Malta, and reinforcing the Royal Navy's Home Fleet, as really happened, or should be sent to the Pacific. You may also transfer repair points from one theater to the next within limits. The rules allow for more limited interchanges between the Kriegsmarine and Imperial Japanese Navy. Since the possibility for this was very limited, I would not allow other than subs to be moved. Truly the ultimate in naval gaming.

BB		NELSON		Feb. 1935H	
PV=15					
MB-AP	(7-5)	3-1	SB-AP		
AA	(3-6)	X	ASW		
TT	X	X	RADAR		
DEF+TPS	8	0	SIZE		
ARMOR	4	4	SPEED		
DAMAGE LEVEL					
MB	SB	AA	ASW	TT	TPS
6	3	2-3	1	X	3
NOB	5	2-2-3	X	X	2
3	1	1-2	X	X	1

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. Five hundred ship data cards, two hundred plane data cards, thirty-six land unit data cards, 180 various marker cards, ten maps (8" x 11"), two hundred counters, ninety damage clips, and fourteen player aid/quick reference cards. The maps cover historical situations (like Savo Island,) 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 rulebook! 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 ten 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 wargames. The cards are not laminated, either, but are printed on a heavy cardstock. They have help up very well to my repeated playings. Mine are color, but *Naval Warfare* has switched to black & white on the cards to cut costs. 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, count-

ers no longer are. One added note: to save additional money on mailing and printing, *Naval Warfare* is providing the rules for the game only on its website. This will keep them current, but could limit sales to people who don't have that kind of access. (*Publisher's Note:* Christopher Dean of Naval Warfare Simulations Informed Paper Wars this is no longer the case. They are now providing printed rules with the game.)

This is an issue each gamer will need to decide. While I appreciate nice graphics, I am more interested in the play. And on that score, *Naval Warfare* holds up very well. Also, you could easily use any other naval games you might have to supply counters and maps. You'd then use *Naval Warfare's* data card and combat system to resolve battles, and track damage. In fact a World War I version of this game (announced as in progress) would answer many a gamers plea for an interesting way to resolve *Great War at Sea* battles generated by the operational scenarios. If I had to provide an executive summary of this review it'd be: Buy this game; you get a lot for your \$40. You can't really consider yourself a serious naval gamer without it.

Naval Warfare Simulations: Warship Combat

(commentary by John D. Burt)

In addition to the player aid that Pat mentioned, *Naval Warfare Simulations* as also released a small computer "game" called *Warship Combat*. This is strictly a ship to ship combat resolver that can handle either the battles you generate, with your World War II game as above, one you generate from your fertile imagination, or one that's randomly selected for you by the computer. This is strictly battles between surface combat ships - there are no merchants, submarines or aircraft in the game.

However you've chosen your fleets, battle resolution takes place on screen with nice detailed silhouettes of the ships involved. Battle lines can have two lines in them, with some ships screening the others usually the lighter ships screening the big boys. Players designate targets for their ship's primary and secondary batteries (if in range) and the program works through the results; showing each ship firing and either splashes or explosions on the target. Resolution is more complex than in the data card game above, with the computer performing the calculations. Damage is shown by colors on ship quantities, as it would with the colored paper clips, plus a "fire" if the damage is moderate or worse.

After two firing rounds (that can include torpedoes), players can attempt to maneuver their ships: this means close, open or maintain the current range. Players can also choose to create smoke screens. Moderately damaged ships can attempt to disengage. You don't get a lot of detail, but it's quick and easy.

As noted above, players can create their own fleet to correspond to the fleets opposing each other in the card game, or any other confrontation, such as *Hood* versus *Bismarck*. One nice feature is the random fleet generation: you choose the nationality, crew quality and size of the fleet and have at it. Time of day and visibility are also variables you can select. Want to really take out your aggressions? Fight your BIG fleet against a small enemy. As a Mediterranean "nut" I like pitting the average Italian large fleets against the crack small British fleets - these battles play out like you'd expect, with most of the British sunk or disengaged, but the Italian fleet hurting.

The program is still evolving and becoming better. In the past two

weeks as this has been written, better artificial intelligence, straddling and different torpedo spreads have been added and discussion is lively on the *Naval Warfare Simulations* Yahoo group chat site about the next series of improvements.

In all if you like the campaign nature of the World War II game and want something to aid the combat resolution; this is a very good tool for \$24. As a standalone "game" of fleet combats, it's pretty good as well.