

# FLAMES OF WAR®

## THE WORLD WAR II MINIATURES GAME

### DEMO GAMES! THE BATTLE BADGERS WAY

*This is a quick couple of notes the Battle Badgers (formerly the Weak Knights) have put together on what works when it comes to preparing for, and running, a demo day. A demo day is a Battlefront Ranger event where we're looking to start up or help grow a community of Flames of War players. We'll describe it in a bit more detail later, but for now let's talk about getting started.*



#### Who, Where and When:

As with any day full of games, the first thing you'll need is a place to play and people to play with. Chances are if you're reading this article in hopes of putting your own demo day together, you've already got a target in mind, perhaps your local game store, or some poor misguided collection of fellow gamers who are simply playing the wrong game. So we know where we want to play and who we want to get playing, now what? Well, you'll need to introduce yourself and possibly the game to the person(s) in charge and schedule a date. Keep this short, we're not teaching the game today, but rather describing a few key points. Describe what first attracted you to the game. These are features that caught your attention at first, so it should be pretty easy for you to be excited about them. For me personally, the historical aspect of Flames of War, the scale, and the terrain modeling opportunities afforded by the scale are key points.

So now we've scheduled our demo day. What day did you pick? This is a very important decision, obviously weekends are going to generally work better than weekdays. But which weekend? Next weekend, the one after?

- To make sure that you've got a crowd, it's important that you book your demos far enough in advance to allow for word of mouth and advertisements to propagate. A month is usually about what you'll want. You might think that rushing to fit a demo into the coming weekend on Thursday afternoon is better than having no demo at all, but that's not necessarily the case. As Rangers we're trying to accomplish two things.
- First, you are trying to convince people that Flames of War is the game they should be playing. Second, you are trying to convince the store owner that it is in their best interest to stock Flames of War. A poor showing at a rushed demo day may leave the store owner questioning this. Why would they spend money to stock a game that apparently doesn't have any interest locally? Yes, we all like the Ranger Incentives/Compensation, but you'll most likely find yourself doing more of them if the ones you've already done have been worthwhile.

## Promotion:

So, we've got a date, and time to prepare. Now it's time to make sure that we use that time wisely and efficiently. The store most likely already has a Facebook page. Ask the store owner to create a Facebook event, and invite their regular customers (folks who have already liked their page). Have at least two Rangers 'Go to' this Facebook event immediately after its creation and get a conversation going. An open ended opinion based question is a good way to do this, discuss the inherent superiority of German Armor, the 'what-ifs' of Operation Sea Lion, the sort of stuff that we've all thought about, but that can't be simply proven with a single link. You will most likely be the only people 'going to' the event at this point but that's fine. Nowadays our attention spans are incredibly short, especially when it comes to online media. We don't want folks to join the event and do nothing more. We want them excited/interested in the event and talking about it regularly. An empty event with no dialogue isn't going to help. Be sure to check in on the event regularly and answer any and all questions. If there are no questions, start asking them yourself in an effort to get a conversation going. Most everyone interested in this game is some sort of history buff, and we history buffs love hypothetical questions, or chances to show off what we know.

Announce the demo day yourself on any local miniature/hobby Facebook groups, being sure to link back to the event mentioned above. The same suggestions for striking up a conversation as above apply to this.

Posters and fliers are the next step, so it's time for another trip to the store. Battlefront provides a nice little standard poster, you can also print a few of your own with your groups logo or name on them. Be sure to include the particulars, along with a couple of nice images and a very brief description of the game. Remember, these are meant to grab people's attention so a nice color poster done on some glossy stock is a great option, and can generally be printed at most office stores for less than a buck. Make sure the posters are hung in a decent position to get people's attention. A small stack of little fliers to be distributed by the register is a fine idea as well. Ask the store owner to give one of your fliers to anyone making a miniature gamer sort of purchase, and to offer to sign them up for a demo game. It's also not a bad idea to bring some of your painted models along for this trip to show to the Store owner, with a bit of luck you might get to give the same spiel to any miniature gamers currently in the store. Ask about where you'll be setting up your demo table. If you're not providing your own terrain for this demo take a look at what the Store is providing and ensure that it's up to snuff.



### What is needed:

I suppose if you're going to be making decisions about whether or not the terrain on hand is what you need, we'd better discuss exactly what it is you'll be needing. Flames of War demo games are best played on a 3 foot by 3 foot board. This board is fairly open, with just enough terrain to demonstrate its effects on the game. A small forest or two of trees, perhaps a field of crops, a little dirt road, and a house or two will do just fine.



### The big day:

Now it's time for the demo day itself. With a bit of luck you should have a short list of folks who'll be attending your demo day from the Facebook event, or possibly from folks who've discussed it with the Store Owner. Take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with your prospective demo'ers. We humans are a fairly narcissistic lot, and the sound of our own name is one of the most important/enjoyable sounds to just about any individual.

### The Game:

Let's talk about the demo game itself. We usually use a subset of the Open Fire Starter Set for our demo games. The German force consists of a platoon of 2 Stug Assault Guns, a single Pak 40k, and a 7 stand platoon of grenadiers. The entire German force is rated confident veteran. The Allied force is a platoon of 2 Sherman V's and a Firefly, and a 5 stand platoon of U.S. Paratroopers. The Shermans are rated confident trained, while the paratroopers are rated Fearless Veteran. These forces are deployed opposite each other (6 inches off of their respective board edges), and a single objective is placed in the center of the board. The first player to bring a turn in sole possession of the objective wins the game. Company morale checks are ignored for the demo game. We've found that with their Stormtrooper move the German force is able to dictate how this game will go early. As a solution to this, the Battle Badgers don't count the objective as 'live' until the third turn of the game. This is not an official part of the Battlefront Ranger demo game, but we hope to make it one.



Ideally you'll have so many people lined up to play that the only way you could possibly fit them all in a single day is to have them play each other. However, you'll most likely end up playing against a player or two yourself. In this case, the most important thing to keep in mind is that your job is to teach the game, not to kick the new guy's teeth in. If this means that your paratroopers are going to get up and attempt an ill-advised assault into the teeth of some nasty defensive fire in an effort to show off the assault mechanic, so be it.

We're looking to teach our players how to play Flames of War, but not in its entirety. Keep in mind that we want each game to be completed in or around 10-15 minutes. This short timeframe is important because we don't want folks to wander off, or leave whilst waiting for a demo. You're obviously not going to be teaching the entire rule set to someone in that amount of time. In fact, you don't really even have time to give a synopsis of the rules and then play the game. What has worked best for us is to teach rules as they become necessary in the game. Before beginning ask about your player(s) miniature gaming experience. In most cases they'll have played with toy soldiers at least once or twice in the past. (If they happen to be brand new to the hobby take a second to describe the basics, such as how to measure and

move.) A brief introduction to the different team types, their movement distance, and the range of their weapon is then in order.

In order to keep the demo game moving, it may be worthwhile to prompt your player(s) with a set of options for each of their platoons, and the pros and cons of each. We want to ensure the players feel they are playing the game, but we want to avoid 5 minute turns where one player is hemming and hawing over which side of the road to place his paratroopers on.



Thus far all of our efforts have been around getting people around the demo table, and for good reason. Nothing attracts a crowd, like a crowd. However, if you don't have anything worthwhile to show people who stop by, you won't keep them around anywhere near long enough. Put a few models (or an army or two) of your stuff out on display. Take the time to do a reasonable job on your demo set. We've also found that relying on the local shop for terrain can leave your demo set fighting over an overly large spaceship, or something else similarly immersion breaking. To ensure that we're always running our demos on a decent table with some reasonable terrain we've made a portable demo table. Details and images on that are on the last page of this document, and in our 'Portable Demo Game Board' thread, in the Ranger's forum.

Discuss which portions of history, theatres, or forces are of particular interest to your opponent while you're playing through the demo or when you're waiting to start your next demo. If you happen to have some of their force of choice on hand, show it off, if not, pull out a book (you brought your books right?) and show them the different choices this particular force affords.

### **Post game:**

Be sure to have a sheet handy to gather contact information for the player's who've shown an interest in your demos. You'll want to follow up your demo day with a 'learn to play day', or possibly even with an escalation league, maybe even Tank Aces.

When it's all said and done, post some of the pictures you were taking all day (you were taking pictures right?) on the store's Facebook page, and thank them for hosting the demo day.



# PORTABLE DEMO GAME BOARD

I remember when I first picked up Flames of War. One of the first things that struck me was how fantastic 15mm models could look on a well made board. This is something I want to make sure that my demo games bring to the table in order to better catch the eyes of any passers by. Rather than rely on the host store to have a worthwhile space, board, and set of terrain to play on I took some time this weekend to put together a sort of suitcase demo board at my buddy's woodshop. Here are a few pictures of it's current state.



I plan on staining the borders a nice honeyed oak color, and possibly sticking a big Flames of War logo on the sides. Once I've finished staining and painting I'll be putting some texture and flock together for the board itself. I'll be attaching a pair of straps to the I hooks as well.

