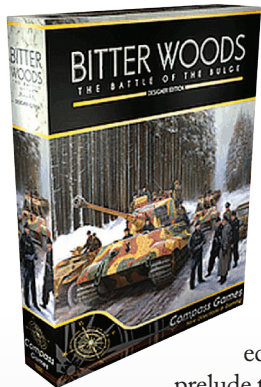


BITTER WOODS

Tournament Scenario



INTRODUCTION:

This Series Replay is the 6 Turn Tournament Scenario (16 AM through 18 PM) of Designer Edition Bitter Woods, as printed in the boxed version by Compass Games, now in its fifth edition. The moderator is the game's designer, Randy Heller. The two opponents are a father and son team who began play with Avalon Hill's Battle of the Bulge 1981 edition by Bruno Sinigaglio, an excellent prelude to Bitter Woods play. Both have experience playing earlier editions of Bitter Woods. Aaron is Alan's son and he will be playing the Germans.

German Opening Strategy/Considerations (Pre-Game)

As the game begins, German High Command is putting the onus of the early advance on the 5th Panzer Army. Early objectives are to grab the bridgeheads across the Our River toward St. Vith, and to trap Allied units in the center. The strategic goal is to limit the Allied response by severing lines of communication/transport and isolate the Allied defenses; ideally, limiting the number of units in the center board. If the line is stretched, I can apply selective force to the weakest points to expedite the German advance west.

With these goals in mind, secondary opening attacks are meant to draw off Allied defenders on the flanks and stretch the defensive line. On the southern flank, the heaviest attack will try to cut the road at Diekirch and complicate the Allied withdrawal. Along the north, German infantry will be more opportunistic, hoping to grab key intersections at 0713 and Rocherath-Krinkelt. I hope to open the road for Peiper on 17 AM by advancing quickly towards Ambleve and Schonberg. After the Allies have set up the first line of withdrawal, I will have more opportunity to direct panzers into the center. In my opinion, the most vulnerable victory spaces are Noville and Parker's Crossroads, but I will be keeping a sharp eye out for alternatives as the game develops.

American Opening Strategy/Considerations (Pre-Game)

Options for the GIs are pretty limited on 16 AM, as defensive positions are predestinated and movement is severely restricted. Depending on the outcome of German combat, I will try to extract as many units as possible from positions where they can be surrounded, and block any roads that could lead into the American backfield. This will be my strategy throughout, but which one takes priority will probably change from turn to turn as the Germans identify weak spots and threaten to do one or the other, or both. It will be a merry dance to keep enough units alive to hold a coherent line!

German 16 AM Turn

Near Monschau, the 326VG will refrain from attacking, but limit Allied movement by placing zones of control along roads, and put German artillery in a better position for 16 PM.

Along the front of the 6th Panzer Army, German infantry and artillery will push the 99th infantry out of the forest hex defenses north of the Losheim Gap. The Allied 14AC could be cut off with any luck and force difficult choices for the American Player.

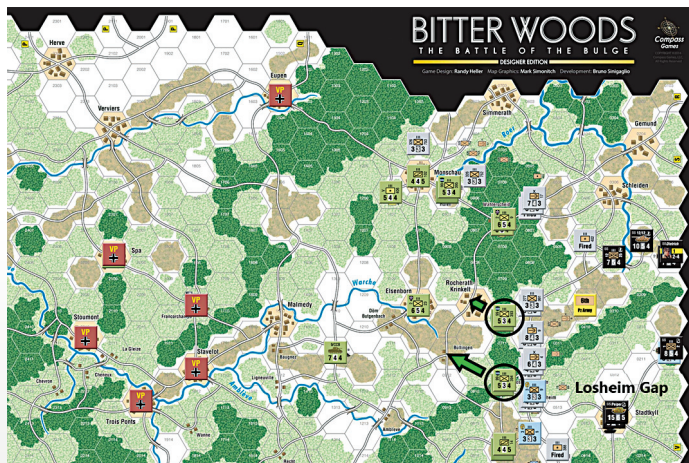


Figure 1.—16 AM German 6th Army Positions and Attack Results

Combat and Results

Hex 0710: Artillery Defense None Odds 3-1 Result D1

Hex 0712: Artillery Defense None Odds 5-1 Result D3

Fifth Panzer Army mechanized units fight through traffic to get heavy odds on the 106th infantry units in the Schnee Eifel. This flies into the face of Allied artillery support, but there's really no getting around that fact. I hope to make enough advances to surround additional units.

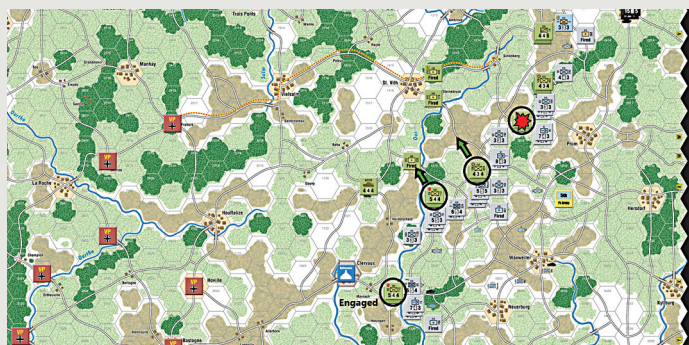


Figure 2.—16 AM German 5th Army Positions and Attack Results

Combat and Results

Hex 0817: Artillery Defense 402 Odds 3-1 Result ELIM

Hex 1220: Artillery Defense None Odds 5-1 Result 1D2

Hex 1019: Artillery Defense 406 Odds 5-1(-1) Result D2

Hex 1424: Artillery Defense None Odds 2-1 Result ENG

Vianden faces most of the force from the 7th Army, and I am skipping any attack against the 9/CCA armor unit. German units will push into Echternach and try to turn the flank.

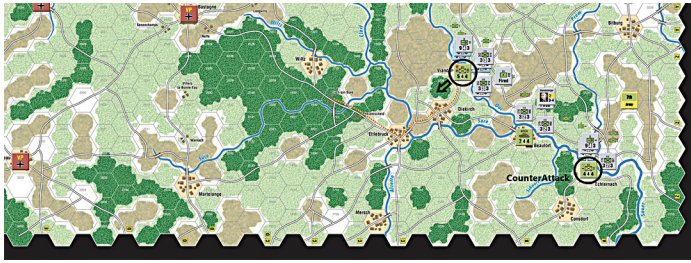


Figure 3.—16 AM German 7th Army Positions and Attack Results

Combat and Results

Vianden: Artillery Defense None Odds 3-1(-1) Result D1

Echternach: Artillery Defense None Odds 2-1(-1) Result CA

American 16 AM Turn

German attacks pushed out defenders north of the Losheim Gap, but 5th Panzer Army units could not advance adjacent to the Our River. This will slow them down next turn and give me the time I need to reposition units coming from the north. Unfortunately, my 14AC and the remaining regiment from the 106 infantry division will have to hold their ground to keep German armor at bay. They will likely pay with their lives.

The road to Eupen can be blocked with minimal commitment, as the Germans look to be pushing elsewhere. It will be interesting to see where 12SS goes.

I will retreat in good order against 7th Army, using two units to defend the roads to Neufchateau and Bastogne. 9/CCA is desperately needed up north.

Moderator Commentary 16 AM

Figuratively speaking, the German Player in this scenario is under the gun. Time is extremely valuable, as there are few game-turns to achieve the victory conditions. Noville is low hanging fruit, which means he must quickly cross the Our River, blast through Clervaux, and get adequate force onto the road to Bastogne. Barring that, the German Player will need to rely on a successful Peiper breakout.

Aaron chose an unorthodox opening by not attacking either Hofen, or the 14AC in the Losheim Gap, in addition to no bridge building across from 28/110. Instead, he focused on the Schnee Eifel, two regiments of the 28th Division, and capturing Vianden. I feel he had some good combat dice, eliminating two U.S. regiments and garnering the D1 at Vianden. It is paramount to keep 28/109 off the road net, so that the unit cannot effectively swing north to cover the center on the opening move. For this reason, my preference is to take a 1-1 without a die roll modifier (DRM) against this unit in Vianden.

German 16 PM Turn

During the opening turn, the German directive was twofold. In the 6th Panzer Army, the design was to set the stage for Peiper

to exploit on December 17. In the 5th Panzer Army, the primary goal was to focus combat in the Schnee Eifel and advance towards St. Vith quickly. In some ways, these goals were achieved. The 6th Panzer Army advance was positive, but Germans in the center did not advance very far. The Allied defense at the end of the turn left some surviving units vulnerable to envelopment, but these units may buy him critical time. My next step is to accelerate the grab for real estate.

Allied defense is scrambling to plug gaps, but the 2/23 at 1013 is a major pain. Just south, the Germans have an opportunity against 9/CCB in the deceptively strong position across the 1117 bridge. The survivors of the 106 infantry division and 14AC will be fed into the meat-grinder.

12SS battles in Rocherath-Krinkelt. Americans set up 2/9 in the town, so the SS Panzer Scare chances are lower. Still, I have a good chance of grabbing the town and perhaps surrounding Bullingen. First SS mechanized units strike Bullingen directly. German infantry attack defenders in 1013.

Allied artillery cannot support everywhere at once. The 402 unit has longer range and is set up to support multiple positions. Those artillery units are perilously close to the front line, and a lucky advance might throw them off.

14AC blocks a crucial crossroads. KG Peiper will use the unit for target practice.

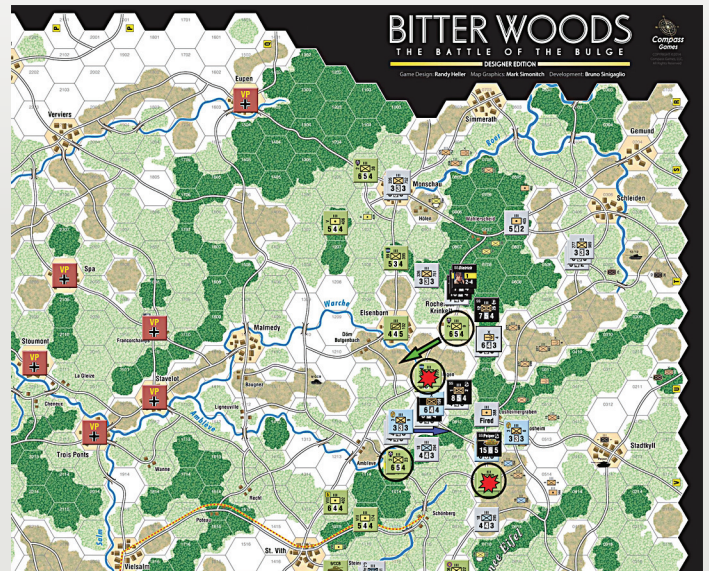


Figure 4.—16 PM German 6th Army Positions and Attack Results

Combat and Results

Rocherath-Krinkelt: No SS Pz Scare Odds 4:1 Result D2

Hex 0911: Artillery Defense 402 Odds 1:1(-1) Result ELIM

Hex 0714: No SS Pz Scare Odds 4:1 Result ELIM

Hex 1013: Artillery Defense None Odds 1:1(+1) Result A2

Panzer Lehr stacks 4-deep and takes a big swing at 9/CCB across the bridge with Combined Arms. This attack should draw the artillery support, but if not, I will definitely cross the bridge at Steinebruck.

General Middleton at the riverside means it will be tough to force 9/CCR out of 1319. Perhaps I can cause him to suffer losses instead.

I will attack and retreat the Bloody 110th, hopefully not directly into Clervaux. The alternative is not attractive. I considered keeping up a low-odds attack in hopes of a continued engagement or firefight, but the 9/CCA could really slow down that region if he takes up position there.

7th Army runs up the road towards Ettlebruck, but German artillery is already lagging behind.

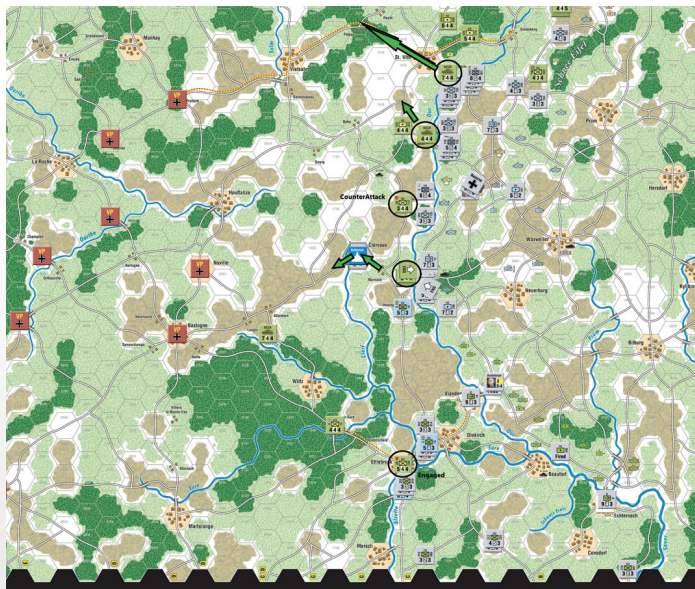


Figure 5.—16 PM German 5th and 7th Army Positions and Attack Results

Combat and Results

Hex 1319: Artillery Defense 333 Odds 2:1(-1) Result D2
 Hex 1216: Artillery Defense 174 Odds 3:1(-1) Result D4
 Hex 1421: Artillery Defense None Odds 2:1(-1) Result CA
 Hex 1424: Artillery Defense None Odds 6:1 Result D3
 Ettlebruck: Artillery Defense None Odds 1:1 (-1) Result ENG

German Mechanized Exploitation

Manteuffel releases 2/304. They cross the bridge at 1319 and encircle Allied units by ending in 1518.

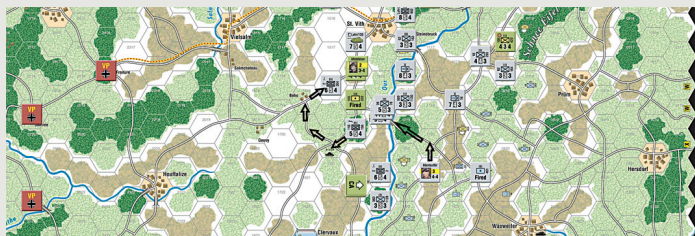


Figure 6.—16 PM German Mechanized Exploitation

A major breakthrough at St. Vith by Lehr, cutting off Middleton, 9/CCR, and 333 artillery. Two units of the 99th infantry are removed from play with Advance After Combat results making KG Peiper's job easier. Capturing Clervaux was promising as well. The GIs will have to play very carefully this game-turn.

American 16 PM Turn

German attacks were successful across the entire front. Now they are set up to exploit with 5th Panzer Army units toward Noville, and 6th Panzer Army units toward Stavelot. Of more immediate concern is the plight of the GIs defending the approaches. Unfortunately, I could not hold the line at Bullingen with the stacked 99th division regiments. This was a calculated risk. For one thing, I dislike stacking units. But given the German successes during 16 AM, I took the chance to create a position that would stop German armor from advancing, even if it meant 1/3 chance of losing the position as well as the units. Normally I take such risks if the die favors me 5 out of 6 times... 4 out of 6 is a risk I will take if circumstances require. I lost this one!

With few German units adjacent and able to cross the Our River, it was essential to hold the bridges. Poor combat results by the defenders required retreats that left the GIs open to German exploitation, which Aaron took advantage of. Middleton should have taken casualties and died with a reduced unit or retreated into the Forest hex. The German combat results against 9/CCB made the situation worse. My poor retreat has cost me dearly.

Unit losses, combined with movement restrictions, have limited my defensive options, especially with KG Pieper and his 17 AM advantages looming. It will be a difficult challenge indeed to hold the line until the cavalry arrives, but I shall fight back where I can.



Figure 7.—16 PM American Positions and Attack Results

Combat and Results

This is painful... rolled two 6's !!!

Hex 1012: Artillery Defense None Odds 4:1(-1) Result D1

Hex 1518: Artillery Defense None Odds 5:1(+1) Result CA

I withdrew to protect and save the artillery, which I left so exposed. Hopefully I kept KG Pieper from Victory Hexes during his breakout movement. I was disappointed the GIs could not cause German casualties despite good odds in my favor. Even so, there may be some opportunities to recover.

I gave up Eupen to see if the German will trigger the Herve reinforcements. I suspect he will. I figure I can get a counterattack against it to regain the VP. I just had to have that extra regiment in the south.

Moderator Commentary 16 PM

I'm witnessing another good game-turn of German combat dice here. The capture of Clervaux was most fortunate, and places the German Player back on track time wise for a continued drive on Bastogne and Noville. However, the lack of a bridge in front of Clervaux over the Our River may make it more difficult for the Germans to reinforce this success. General Middleton looks to be trapped, and that means he will be unable to call for a stand fast – no retreat at Bastogne and/or Noville during the last game-turn or two. That's dangerous for the Americans. At this moment, the center is at risk of collapsing. However, Allied air interdiction is very effective, and can be used to completely shut down a road net. Placement of air interdiction in and near Beho would be most effective. I'm surprised to see General Brandenberger is not accompanying the one mechanized unit in the German 7th Army. That means no threat of a reserve unit being released in the south in the near future. Otherwise, Aaron is doing very well. Time for the American Player to anticipate the KG Peiper breakout move.

German 17 AM Turn

The Allied line is in a position to be overrun. Units of the 12SS head west along the road towards Eupen road infantry following behind. 12SS panzers remain in reserve with Dietrich. Allied positions at Ambleve and Elsenborn will be surrounded at high combat odds. Air interdiction near St. Vith isn't difficult for my infantry to avoid. I can still move adjacent to his corps artillery. 3/9 Fallschirmjagers run ahead and engage artillery at 1407, possibly to set the stage for KG Peiper's reserve movement.

Lehr makes a run towards Vielsalm with fewer and fewer defenders in sight. The other mechanized units of the 5th Panzer Army get hung up on Middleton's pocket.

Panzer Lehr is on the move and drives overland to the 1614 road to push back 102AC.

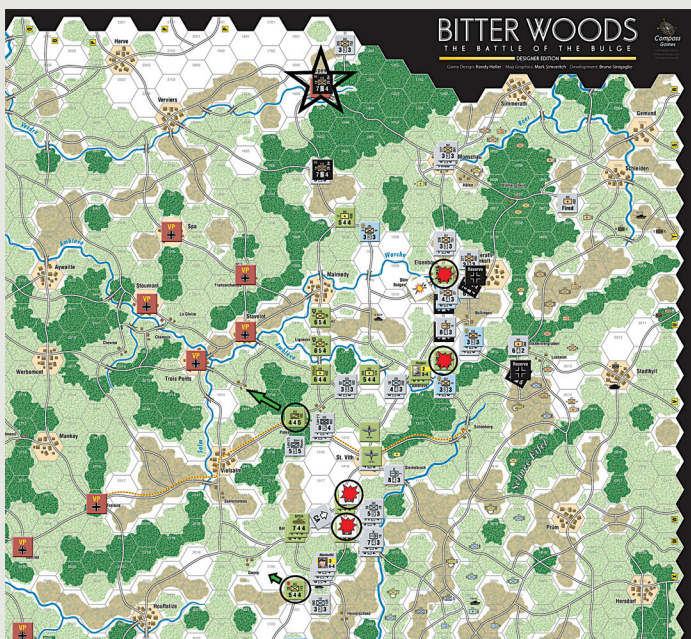


Figure 8.—17 AM German 6th and 5th Army Positions and Attack Results

Combat and Results

Elsenborn: Artillery Defense None Odds 4:1(-1) Result ELIM
 Hex 1012: Artillery Defense None Odds 7:1(-1) Result ELIM
 Hex 1614: Artillery Defense None Odds 6:1(-1) Result 1D2
 Hex 1418: Artillery Defense None Odds 5:1 Result ELIM
 Hex 1417: Artillery Defense None Odds 6:1(-1) Result ELIM
 Hex 1620: Artillery Defense None Odds 5:1(-1) Result 1D1
 Southwards, low odds attacks hope to create ENG or FF results. The line is thinnest from Ettlebruck to Gouvy, so German infantry will attempt to infiltrate and increase the points of contact.

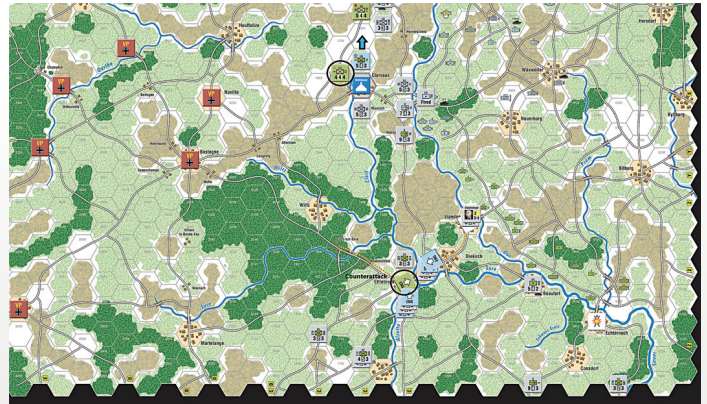


Figure 9.—17 AM German 7th Army Positions and Attack Results

Combat and Results

Hex 1723: Artillery Defense None Odds 1:1 Result A1
 Hex 1431: Artillery Defense None Odds 2:1(-1) Result CA

German Mechanized Exploitation

12SS panzers drive up toward Malmédy and set up shop in 1411. This cuts off Allied 174 artillery, as well as Hodges and 2/23. Several major bridges are captured.

In order to keep the SS Panzers on the road, as well as exert ZOC into 1508, Peiper divides his forces and sends 1SS PzGr battalion into 1408. The unit takes advantage of the combat-after-exploitation rule and attacks corps arty 406 at 1407.

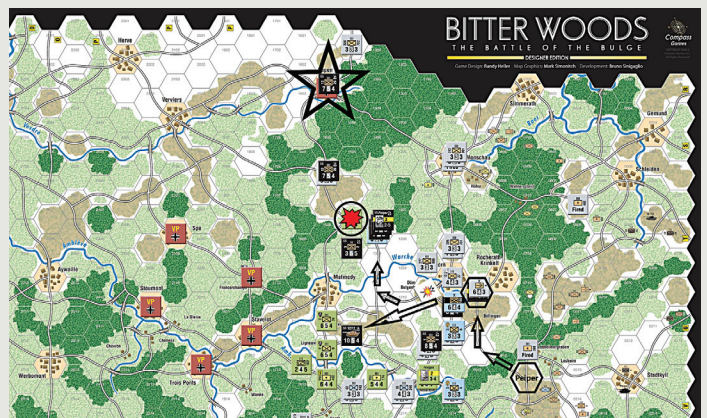


Figure 10.—17 AM German Mechanized Exploitation

Combat and Results

Hex 1407: Odds 5:1(-1) Result ELIM

American 17 AM Turn

So, the objective was to keep KG Pieper out of any Victory Point Hex, and in that regard I succeeded. I was willing to give up Eupen, with the thought that it could be taken back with oncoming reinforcements. We shall see if that can happen. I committed my airplanes to hold open a retreat path for my artillery, and failed miserably. Given this blunder, it will take some sharp play to recover.

Having given up Eupen without a fight, I cannot abandon the attempt to take it back. It will be a challenge, but I have to carry through. I'm frustrated that my poor allocation of air power last turn did not make this gambit more viable, as the whole purpose for the P-47s was to clear a retreat path for the forward artillery to retreat from. I have put the mistake behind me, and I will figure out how to fix it.

German units around Malmedy can be severely limited by both terrain and American defenders. Other German 6th Panzer Army units can be delayed by surrounded Americans in the backfield. Even 9/CCR, depleted as it is, can do its part to delay the German juggernaut!

In the south, I will try to keep open the roads to Bastogne so that American units can enter to defend this vital position. I'm not sure I have done enough to accomplish this, but if so, it will relieve a lot of pressure on the GIs in the center.

American 17 AM Combat and Results

Hex 1503: Odds 1:1 Result FF

Hex 1431: Odds 1:1 Result A1

Moderator Commentary 17 AM

For the want of a single unit, the American Player abandoned Eupen, which is likely the easiest position to defend. That will be difficult to recover from. In fact, at this time, the Germans are having a royal romp in the north, pocketing American units and driving westward. The center and south are another story. The Germans have yet to break the Clervaux river line or capture Ettlebruck. There are enough Yanks in Beho to ensure countering the Germans in the center. But the north...oy vey! The American Player should not attempt to rescue any pocketed units at this time, but use his incoming reinforcements to block further German movement westward.

German 17 PM Turn

By this time, the Allies are in a freefall. KG Peiper's advance picked off another corps artillery unit and secured two important crossroads (1506, 1407). Leaving the road to Eupen completely open (without even air interdiction on the only road) not only allows me a free VP hex, but also opens up an entirely new area for the Yanks to cover. Meanwhile, lucky advances and clever infiltration bagged multiple units. In classic style, German mechanized units race past the defenders, while the infantry and artillery mop up the rear.

The Allied Player has lost so many units that he will struggle to cover what he must, and fall back elsewhere. Panzer Lehr will enter Vielsalm this turn, and the 6th Panzer Army units will consolidate the Malmedy position, as well as pivot off of Eupen to drive down the road to Verviers. 6th Panzer Army panzers will open up the Verviers road. With only a few units left to block it, I will try to limit the options and force hard decisions about defending the fuel dump and Stavelot. More good luck - Skorzeny successfully sneaks by defenders in 1707 to get adjacent to Spa. The road west is opening quickly.

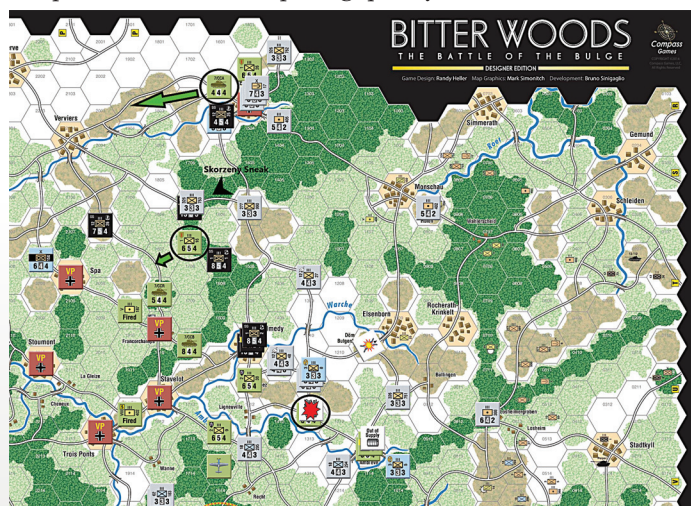


Figure 11.—17 AM German 6th Army Positions and Attack Results

Combat and Results

Hex 1602: Artillery Defense None Odds 5:1(-1) Result D3

Hex 1707: Artillery Defense 187 Odds 1:1(-1) Result D1

Hex 1312: Artillery Defense None Odds 5:1 Result ELIM

While infantry clear the Allied survivors in the St. Vith area, 2nd Panzer surrounds 4/12 huddled in Clervaux. The American defense seems desperate. I can maneuver units behind the defenders there, surrounding and eliminating them. Other units advance to open up the road towards Houffalize. Meanwhile, units of 116th Panzer are held in reserve nearby.

Lehr Recon makes a dash around Vielsalm, seizing the bridgehead at 2016 and pinning the armored defenders against the forest. The hex was an excellent fallback, but it should have been manned by infantry to avoid this entanglement. The remainder of Lehr's division will drive home the attack with infantry support to permit an advance (otherwise, the Army Boundary line would prohibit this).

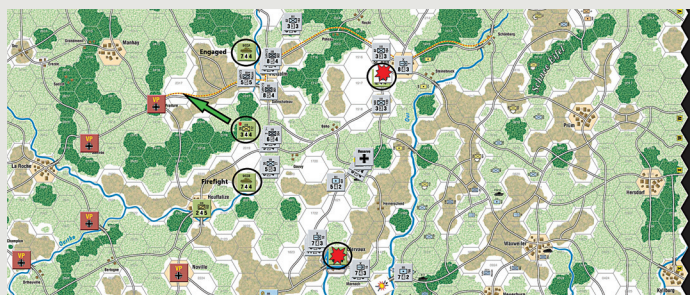


Figure 12.—17 AM German 5th Army Positions and Attack Results

Combat and Results

Hex 2015 Artillery Defense 402 Odds 2:1(-1) Result ENG
 Hex 1416 Artillery Defense None Odds 7:1(-1) Result ELIM
 Hex 2018 Artillery Defense None Odds 5:1(-1) Result D3
 Hex 2020 Artillery Defense None Odds 1:1(-1) Result FF
 Clervaux: Artillery Defense None Odds 5:1 Result ELIM

Along the south, German infantry take up positions for the Consdorf garrison. The 5th Fallschirmjagers hustle down the Army Boundary line, dash through Wiltz, and come up to attack the Bloody 110th in 2226. One more lucky die roll could bag Bastogne. Time is running out.

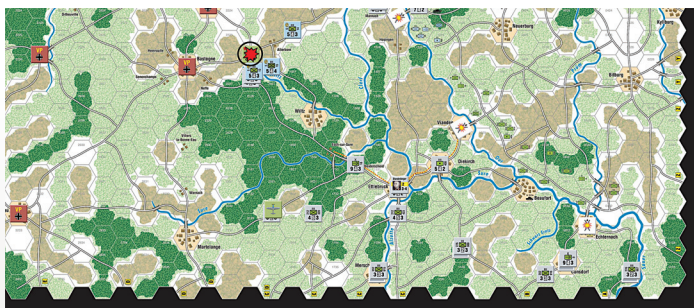


Figure 13.—17 AM German 5th Army Positions and Attack Results

Combat and Results

Hex 2126: Artillery Defense None Odds 4:1(-1) Result ELIM
 The end seems nigh, but Alan is a wily player and never more troublesome than when his back is against the wall. I anticipate a hard fight.

German Mechanized Exploitation

Manteuffel sends 116/156 to Noville and leads 116/60 to Bastogne

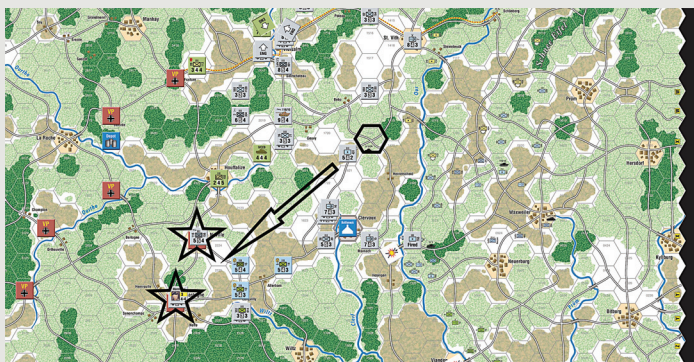


Figure 14.—17 PM German Mechanized Exploitation

American 17 PM Turn

Skorzeny and 12SS Panzer Grenadiers collapse the defense in the north, Lehr Recon punctures the center, and Manteuffel's reserves drive into both Bastogne and Noville after 7th Army units crush the defenders on the road. That gives the German Player 3 Victory Point hexes and 12+ eliminated American units. Considering the dire situation, I have offered my opponent a draw. His reply?

“Nuts!”

Hmmm... perhaps it would be better to concede... I have done so, and Aaron has accepted.

Moderator Commentary 17 PM

Another fatal mistake committed by the American Player – the failure to anticipate the possibility of German reserve placement and German mechanized exploitation. One air interdiction placed in Allerborn or Longvilly would have retained both Bastogne and Noville for the Americans. With the German capture of these two towns, a game win was sealed without any doubt. The successful Skorzeny sneak in the north was only icing on the cake.

German Post Game Comments

Total breakthrough. Noville, Bastogne, and Eupen are in German hands. Fourteen Allied units are eliminated. Onward to Antwerp!

I can honestly say I have been lucky in all the right places. There aren't enough Allied units left to challenge the Germans for all three VP hexes. If this were a campaign game, it would be a nightmare which could result in a German Strategic Victory.

American Post Game Comments

I want to play this one again! There are a lot of different ways it could have turned out with a tweak here and there. Despite the crushing loss, it did not have to end up this way.

The German opening combat results placed immediate pressure on the Americans, but this was to be expected. My decision to move the artillery near St. Vith forward to support surviving units was a risk, and I made it with the mental note to justify it by retreating them to fight another day. I just didn't do it right. US artillery units are essential, and losing one or more is a recipe for disaster. Allowing the German Player to eliminate 3, and prevent them from firing several times over multiple turns was a credit to the German Player's tactics and a failure of mine.

Airpower is undeniably the saving grace for the GIs when it becomes available. I applied them poorly. Using both of them to block the road to Eupen would have been better. Using both of them to block 7th Army units moving west could have prevented the battle that opened the road to Bastogne and Noville. What was I thinking?

I chose to play a very aggressive defense with almost everyone up front every turn. This gave me the opportunity for an early counterattack which had a good chance to sting the Germans and hold them back a turn. Unfortunately, it failed, and I did not give enough thought to pulling units out of bad situations if things went wrong. Once they did indeed start to go wrong, I was stuck, and unable to figure out how to shift to more conservative tactics.

Which brings me to this observation, i.e., retreat tactics. American retreats can and MUST be done to deny advantageous German advances and devastating exploitation movement. I failed in this early on with retreats behind the Our River. Consider the alternative positions of 9th Armored if they had retreated to defend the vulnerable artillery and blocked Mechanized Exploitation across the bridge south of St. Vith. The point is retreats are done “spur of the moment”, and done with short term, rather than long term consequences in mind. It takes a refined mindset to retreat

correctly! I did not do this well, turn after turn... <sigh>... and I did not backstop units vulnerable to the effects of retreat.

In summary, my loss of artillery support, poor air interdiction placement, and poorly considered retreats/backstops all combined to result in a colossal defensive failure.

I wholeheartedly give credit to Aaron for playing the Germans as they should be played, with thoughtful positioning and overwhelming combat odds. He was ruthless.

I, on the other hand, must berate myself for failing to plan effectively, squandering forces foolishly, and ignoring basic tactical considerations. The result was not surprising. Good play on his part and poor play on mine equals a German win.

And lest the reader go away with the wrong impression, I am not at all unhappy with this loss. I learned a lot, and Aaron is, after all, my son. Being beaten so badly in such a public forum is, well, embarrassing, but we are both gentlemen and able to place such a thing in its proper perspective.

I have disinherited him.

Moderator Summary Comments

Some say the opening game moves for Bitter Woods are chess-like in nature. Like chess, a poor opening can be recovered from. But two back-to-back careless moves can be lethal. Aaron's opening German strategy was definitely unorthodox. With no bridge building attempt in front of Clervaux, it quickly became apparent that he was focusing on a "quick kill" strategy to surround and to eliminate American units. This worked for him in the north, but made it potentially easier for Alan to defend the south and center, simply because the limited number of game turns would allow him to sacrifice units for space in these areas.

Probably the greatest dynamic in Bitter Woods game play is the Mechanized Exploitation Phase, whereby leader units can release mechanized units in reserve to exploit a hole in the defense created by favorable combat results. This potential has to be anticipated and accounted for when creating an effective defense. This often can be done by placing either air interdiction or artillery immediately behind the front line somewhere on the road net. Alan overlooked this possibility, resulting in Aaron capturing both Bastogne and Noville during the 17 PM game-turn mechanized exploitation. This understandably proved to be a game ending move.

As noted in the game's Designer's Notes, the Allied Player must be patient and study all his defense options. With continued play and acquired skill, one can eventually develop the expertise needed to realize the edge given the Allies in Bitter Woods.



99	III	394
5	3	4

9/CCA		
7	4	4

FuhGd		
9	5	4

12	III	27
4	4	3

