

The Boardgamer's

PANZER LEADER

Special Issue



**Featuring New Counters, New Situations,
Historical Corrections and Rules Clarifications**

Introduction To The Special Issue Of PANZER LEADER

By Alan Arvold

Back in the early 1970's after the game PANZERBLITZ was published by Avalon Hill, there were many attempts to transpose the game to the Western Front of 1944-45. Amateur authors such as Mike Kelly, Bruce Belcher, Paul Mills, and Roy Easton came up with rules and variant counters for what became known as "Western Front PANZERBLITZ". But the most prolific of them all was Norman Beveridge Jr. who created whole expansions for PANZERBLITZ including rules, scenarios, variant counter sheets, and mapboards which were published in the various amateur wargaming magazines of the time. Nor was all this creative process confined to the amateur gamers. Professional companies such as SPI and Avalon Hill were also working on a western version of PANZERBLITZ. SPI who originally developed PANZERBLITZ was first out the door with a magazine game called COMBAT COMMAND. While the game introduced many new concepts it was a further evolution of the PANZERBLITZ system, so much so that the two were not compatible. (Not to mention that the game also quickly turned into a flop.) But at Avalon Hill a different approach was taken.

At the Hill it was decided to keep the basic PANZERBLITZ game system and mechanics. However certain changes had to be made in order to correct the known deficiencies that were in the game system, plus new concepts were introduced to expand the game system rather than evolve it. The chief developer, Randall Reed, and the various playtest groups definitely had their hands full during the design and development period. But by the early fall of 1974 their work came to fruition and the game PANZER LEADER was released in Avalon Hill's mail order service. Sales proved to be so good that in early 1975 it was released to retail distribution and then sales really took off.

PANZER LEADER was immensely popular among wargamers, it even exceeded its predecessor in overall sales. Not only that, the game spawned several variants, among which PANZER LEADER 1940 turned out to be one of the best expansions Avalon Hill ever released. However by 1978 its popularity began to decline as a new

kind of tactical level wargame, SQUAD LEADER, entered the market. This game took tactics to a whole new level, something that both PANZER LEADER and PANZERBLITZ could never hope to achieve. It appeared that both games were heading for the dustbin by the early 1980's but then their popularity started to rise again. It seemed that as SQUAD LEADER grew in complexity, eventually becoming ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER in the mid 1980's, its growth in popularity started to slow down as some players were scared off by its long playing time and instead turned to faster easy games such as PANZER LEADER. With that its popularity came back though not to the extent of the 1970's, and it remained a good seller. As testimony to this fact after the demise of the old Avalon Hill, PANZER LEADER disappeared from the stores as just about every last copy was grabbed up by wargamers. Now, at the turn of the century, the only way to get a copy of PANZER LEADER is through second hand sources.

Unlike its predecessor, PANZER LEADER never had a Wargamer's Guide produced for it though it certainly deserved one. With THE GENERAL magazine long gone and the BOARDGAMER magazine becoming heir to its readership, the opportunity has presented itself to correct this error. Here then is the BOARDGAMER's Special Issue for PANZER LEADER. Included are brand new situations never before published, new counters for these situations, many old situations revised, a compilation of every published game question answered by Avalon Hill, an analysis of the new counters that have been introduced over the years, and much more. It is our hope the PANZER LEADER players find enjoyment in them.

Again it would be rude of me if I did not mention the people who contributed to the making of this guide. Again leading the way is Michael P. Flagiello. He has collaborated with me on several articles in this guide and provided me with much information on German TO&Es and unit strengths in many of the battles presented. Deserving honorable mention is Steven B. Wheeler. Many old gamers will remember his analyses of many of the original PANZER LEADER situations that have appeared in THE GENERAL over

the years. Although he received many of the scenarios that are in this guide long before this project began and started his analyses of them, he sadly had to decline participation in this project due to pressing personal matters. His input has been missed. I would also like to thank Bill Scott who allowed his PANZER LEADER tournament at AVALONCON to be a testing ground for many of the scenarios. Among the play testers were Oscar Kenneth Oates, Joy Richards, Byron Henderson, and Jay Zollitsch. My thanks to them all.

With the sale of Avalon Hill and the subsequent disappearance of the game from the store shelves, it appears that the game might become but a memory. However with the purchase by Multi-Man-Publishing of the rights to republish the game, the future is looking brighter. With the redevelopment of both PANZER LEADER and PANZERBLITZ into one system and the tentative release of PANZER LEADER in the next few years it looks like that the game will be here well into the 21st Century.



The BOARDGAMER's Special Issue Of Panzer Leader

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