

**Fox's Gambit**  
**High Flying Dice Games, 2011**  
**After-Action Report**  
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This is an after-action report of a solitaire play-through of *Fox's Gambit*, published by High Flying Dice Games (HFD) in 2011. The game is an operational simulation of the Battle of Gazala, May-June 1942. The game was designed by Paul Rohrbaugh and has been published by a number of companies in different versions. The current version features graphics by Bruce Yearian and is subtitled "Blitzkrieg in the Desert Series, Volume 1."

**Components**

HFD is a high-end desktop publishing firm, owned by Paul Rohrbaugh. The components are all of good quality. The map comes as two 11x17 inch map sections (east and west) on heavy paper that must be trimmed and mated before play. There is one sheet of 130 single-sided counters, of which 44 are units and the rest markers. While the standard price of the game includes unmounted counters, HFD will supply mounted but uncut counters for an extra fee. I chose that option, cutting out the counters with the help of a flatbed rotary cutter. The rules are laser-printed on 8 sheets of letter size paper (single sided, including notes and a counter scan) stapled at one corner. Tables are printed in the rules and on the map. The game is packaged in a plastic sheet saver, with a full-color cover sheet.

**Scale**

The game is played in one-day turns, from May 27 through June 29, 1942. The map scale is not specified, but the distance from Tobruk to Bir Hachem is 17 hexes. The southern edge of the map is the "Southern Redeployment Zone." (SRZ) Axis units and the Allied Long-Range Desert Group (LRDG) may freely move into or out of this zone.

Commonwealth units are brigades, and Italian units are mostly divisions, with a few regiments. German units vary from brigade to kampfguppen. Rommel has his own marker. Airpower is represented by markers, two on each side.

**Rules Summary**

This is a low-to-medium complexity game. Experienced gamers will have little difficulty learning the rules. The game is played in player-turns. The phases in the Axis player-turn are supply, air, movement, combat, mine clearance, and recovery. The Allied player turn's phases are supply, movement, air, combat, and recovery. Note that the Axis player moves after he conducts air combat, while the Allied player must move first. The Allied player has no need to conduct mine clearance in this game.

Counter Sheet<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All photographs and scans are the author's own.

Allied units in fortified boxes are in supply until the second refit turn. The Free French brigade (which may not leave Bir Hachem) and the LRDG are always in supply.

*Zones of control* are conventional. They stop movement, block supply and retreat, and force combat. They do not extend into fortified boxes. Disrupted units in an enemy ZoC at the end of the combat phase must retreat.

*Stacking* is two Allied units. All the units in a German division, plus one more regiment or KG, may stack. Italian divisions may stack with one regiment or German unit. Rommel and the LRDG stack for free.

*Air* units are used to attack enemy stacks in their side's air phase. Only one air unit may be used per attack. Each attacked unit is rolled for separately. The possible outcomes are "no effect," disruption, or air unit shot down. "No effect" is the most common outcome. Units in boxes get a bonus, and Italian units get a penalty. Players may commit their air units to intercept enemy air attacks. The possible results are one or the other is shot down, or the attacker's mission is aborted. Shot-down air units return two turns later.

*Movement* is conventional. Mechanized units have movement allowances in the 4-6 range, while infantry's allowance is 2. There are terrain effects as one might expect. Units that move into the SRZ may move out of it from any point at the beginning of the following turn. The Axis player may move off the eastern map edge to get victory points; however if the Allied player declares a strategic withdrawal, these points are negated. The Allied player gets reinforcements during his movement phase on certain game turns. There is a chance that the Axis may get the *Littorio* armored division.

*Combat* is mandatory for units in enemy ZoCs. The CRT is odds-based. Results include retreat, disruption, and elimination. Defenders may declare "no retreat," which converts retreats into disruptions; however an R\* result will eliminate such units instead. There are various terrain effects, as you would expect. An interesting little twist is that you roll to see whether units in a fortified box will get a bonus of +2 or +3 combat factors. There is no advance after combat.

The Allied player has *minefields* printed on the map. Boxes are also considered to be minefields. An Axis unit requires all of its movement allowance to enter a minefield hex. Supply may not be traced through minefield hexes. Axis units attacking into a minefield suffer a column shift penalty on the CRT. Axis units in minefields at the end of the movement phase suffer a bombardment attack, as if attacked by an air unit. Axis units in or adjacent to a minefield may attempt to clear it in the minefield clearance phase. On a roll of 6, the field is cleared; on a 1, the unit is disrupted. The Axis has a special unit, KG Heckler, which allows clearing mines on 5 or 6. There are markers to indicate cleared minefields.

It should be noted that the minefields stretch the entire north-south length of the map. Thus, while it is possible for the Germans to skirt the minefields via the SRZ, they will not be able to trace supply until they have cleared gaps in the fields.

In the *Recovery* phase, in-supply disrupted units return to their normal status. Out of supply Italian units may surrender. If this is a refit turn, the player rolls for each eliminated unit to see if

it comes back as a refit. A refitted unit gets a special marker that reduces its combat strength by 1.

Beginning with turn 5, the Axis player may declare a *refit turn* or must roll to see if one occurs anyway. The probability increases with every extra turn. During a refit turn, units may not move more than one hex and may not enter a ZoC. There is no combat. As noted above, eliminated units may be replaced during refit turns, and supply rules change. After the refit turn, a marker is placed 6 turns ahead on the turn record track, to indicate when the process begins again.

At the end of any turn, the Allied player may declare a *strategic withdrawal*. The Free French brigade is immediately removed from the map, and any other in-supply Allied units may also be removed. The game ends three turns later. The Axis gains victory points for this declaration, with more be awarded the earlier it takes place.

*Rommel* has various superpowers. Units that begin stacked with him get an extra movement point. He provides a column shift to attacking units he is stacked with. He can be placed on any friendly stack at the end of the movement phase. Before the second refit turn, units stacked with Rommel during the supply phase are automatically in supply. Italian units stacked with Rommel don't surrender. Unlike some Gazala games, however, Rommel can be eliminated in combat, if all the units he is stacked with are.

The game is *won* on points. Both sides get points for eliminating enemy units and being the last to occupy Tobruk. The Axis gets points for when the Allies declare a strategic withdrawal or for exiting units off the eastern map edge. Eliminating Rommel is worth twice as many points as holding Tobruk.

### Turn 1 (May 27)

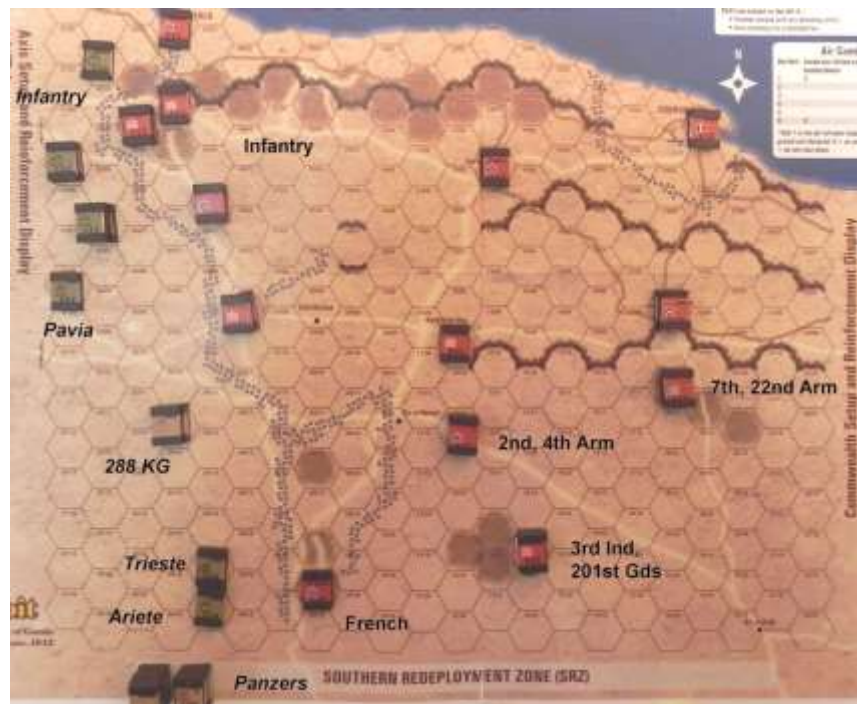
The Germans launch airstrikes against the two stacks of British armour, hoping to immobilize them in the following turn. The British attempt to intercept. The result is that the one RAF unit is shot down, but the *Luftwaffe* is aborted. The RAF fails to hurt the *Regia Aeronautica*, but neither does the Italian air strike have any effect.

The two *panzer* divisions disappear into the Southern Redeployment Zone (SRZ), while *Trieste* and *Ariete* march south toward Bir Hachem. *Pavia*, 228 KG, carrying along *KG Hecker*, also move south. The other Italian infantry units spread out to cover the front on their side of the minefields.

There is no combat. During the minefield clearance phase, *Brescia*, *Trento*, and *Sabratha* each try to clear a hex. None succeed. *Brescia* is disrupted.

The British shift 3rd Indian Mech into the Retima Box with 201st Guards. They also move 2nd and 4th Armour to cover the gap between the minefields and the Knightsbridge Box. Not much more they can do until the *panzers* emerge from the south.

The RAF sends its remaining unit against *Ariete*. The *Luftwaffe* tries to intercept but has no effect. However, the Italians shoot them down anyway, leaving the British with no air support for the next two turns.



End of Turn 1

## Turn 2 (May 28)

The Axis launches airstrikes against the Retima Box and the 2nd and 4th Armour stack. *Regia Aeronautica* has no luck against Retima. *Luftwaffe* fares worse than that, getting itself shot down.

*Ariete* moves into the SRZ. *Trieste* moves adjacent to one of the minefields outside Bir Hachem, as does 228 KG with *KG Hecker*.

The *panzers* emerge from the desert and go straight after 2nd and 4th Armour.

The Italian infantry mostly hold in place, hoping for better mine clearance rolls. *Pavia* continues marching south towards Bir Hachem.

The German attack on the British Armour result is R\*. The armour retreats west of Knightsbridge and is disrupted.

The Italian mine clearing attempts have no effect, for good or ill.

With half their armour disrupted and facing two concentrated *panzer* divisions, there isn't much the British can do. 7th Armour moves into the Knightsbridge Box, while 22nd Armour moves into El Adem.





End of Turn 2

### Turn 3 (May 29)

The Axis launches an air strike against 2nd and 4th Armour with the *Regia Aeronautica*. It succeeds in disrupting 2nd Armour.

The immediate Axis objective is to open up a path through the minefields before the first refit turn, which may be as early as Turn 6. The *panzer* divisions move to the Knightsbridge area so that they can break through the British mobile units and hit the infantry guarding the minefields from behind. The Italian infantry continues to try to clear the mines from the front. *Ariete* stays in the SRZ, from which it can dash out to attack Bir Hachem as soon as *Trento* and 228 KG have succeeded in making a breach.

This is an unusual Gazala game in that it has mandatory attack rules: every undisrupted enemy unit adjacent to a friendly unit must be attacked. Thus, the *panzers* have to divide their strength between the British 2nd and 4th Armour in the desert and the stack of 7th Armour and 6th South African, which are in the Knightsbridge Box.



Turn 3 Axis combat

*21st Panzer Division* and *21/90Lt Brigade* attack *2nd and 4th Armour*. It's a 2:1 attack, shifted to 3:1 because *2nd Armour* is already disrupted. The result is -/R\*, meaning that the British are disrupted and must retreat. They move back one hex<sup>2</sup>.

*15th Panzer Division*, accompanied by *Rommel* and *90th Light*'s assault guns, go after *Knightsbridge*. *Rommel*'s combat bonus cancels the effect of the box' minefields, but the British get +3 strength points as well, resulting in a 1:1 attack. The result is -/-, or no effect. Given that this was intended as a "soak-off" for the other attack, this is acceptable.

The Italian minefield clearing attempts are unsuccessful. The *7th Infantry Regiment* is disrupted.

In an action that may not have been well-advised, the units of *21st Panzer* attempt to clear the mines to the west, so as to open up some maneuvering room. The attempts fail, and *21/90th Light* is disrupted.

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<sup>2</sup> Upon later rereading the rules, R\* requires a retreat of 2-3 hexes. I missed that throughout the game.

The Commonwealth pulls together all of its mobile units and launches an attack on *21st Panzer*. It also sends the RAF against both *panzer* stacks, hoping to score some disruptions before the ground assault goes in.



Turn 3 Commonwealth combat

The *Regia Aeronautica* intercepts the RAF strike against *21st Panzer* but fails to have any effect. However, the first strike die roll against each of the *panzer* divisions results in the attacking RAF unit being shot down.

The ground attack is a 2:1, but *Rommel's* influence shifts it to a 3:2<sup>3</sup>. The Commonwealth ground forces are luckier than their air units, getting a -/R result. The Germans retreat to the hex south of *15th Panzer* and are disrupted.

The disrupted British armour recovers at the end of the turn.

<sup>3</sup> Another error. Rommel should get a column shift only for attacks.





Turn 3 end

#### Turn 4 (May 30)

The *Luftwaffe* returns to play. The Axis launches air strikes against 22nd Armour and the stack containing 201st Guards and 3rd Indian. The hope is that one or both will be disrupted enough to allow an attack by *15th Panzer*, the only German mobile unit that isn't disrupted. There is no RAF to interfere. The Axis bombers do quite well, disrupting both 22nd Armour and 201st Guards.

The Axis decides to attack the stack of two units, since it can't attack 22nd Armour without also attacking the stack as well. *21st Panzer* swings around to the southeast, so as to push the Commonwealth units against the escarpment. *Rommel* (who can't be disrupted) pops over to help.

The initial odds are only 1:1, but they get a column shift for *Rommel* and another for the disrupted Guards, resulting in a 2:1. Unfortunately, they get a -/- result. The disrupted Guards have to retreat out of the Axis ZoC anyway, joining 22nd Armour.



Turn 4 Axis combat

The Italians clear no mines but suffer no disruptions. All Axis units recover from previous disruptions.

The Commonwealth temporarily (they hope) empties the Knightsbridge Box in order to concentrate everything they can on attacking *21/90th Light*. On the western minefields, the Commonwealth notices that the weak Italian *7th Infantry* regiment is on its own, and they move four infantry brigades to see what trouble they can cause.

Both attacks result in a -/R, retreating and disrupting the Axis units.



Turn 4 Commonwealth combat

The disrupted British units recover at the end of their player turn.



Turn 4 end.

### Turn 5 (May 31)

The Axis launches airstrikes against the two Commonwealth stacks at the eastern end of the Knightsbridge gap. They have no effect.

*Ariete* moves out of the SRZ to a point where it can either support the *panzers* or attack Bir Hachem. *Trieste* moves into the SRZ. *Pavia* continues to plod southward. *9th Infantry* moves to join *7th Infantry*, in case the Commonwealth decides to extend its attack west of the minefields. The *panzers* want to trap 22nd Armour and 201st Guards against the escarpment. *21st Panzer*, bolstered by *Rommel* and *90th Light's* assault guns, carries out the main attack while *15th Panzer* soaks off against 3rd Indian and 6th South African.





Turn 5 Axis

The main attack is a 2:1, shifted one column by *Rommel*. The result is -/R. This game allows units to retreat through a ZoC if occupied by friendly units. This allows the defenders to skirt the escarpment and retreat into the Knightsbridge Box, where they are disrupted. The soak-off attack results in R/-, retreating and disrupting *15th Panzer*.

*Sabratha* manages to clear one of the minefields in front of the Alem Hamza Box.

In the recovery phase, all the Axis units are undisrupted.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Here we have a rules anomaly. *15th Panzer* was disrupted in the immediately preceding phase. According to the sequence of play, it is now undisrupted. This seems pointless. I have posted a message on Consimworld seeking a



The Commonwealth seems to be in a good position. They have a good defensive position holding the Knightsbridge gap, and the Axis hasn't caused them any casualties. 6th South African moves one hex northwest, stacking with 7th Armour just southwest of the box. 4th Armour moves along the track north of the escarpment so that it can react to Axis moves towards El Adem or Knightsbridge as necessary. 3rd Indian joins 2nd Armour in the minefield hex just north of Bir El Hamat. The infantry that had sortied into the western minefields return to their boxes.

There is no combat. 22nd Armour and 201st Guards, both in the Knightsbridge Box, become undisrupted in the recovery phase.

#### Turn 6 (June 1)

The Axis launches an airstrike against the French in Bir Hachem and another against the units in the minefield north of Bir El Hamat. The attack on the French is shot down, and the other is ineffective.

The Germans are now in the period where they will have to start rolling for the first refit turn. As soon as that occurs, units that aren't stacked with *Rommel* will have to trace a supply line. Since there isn't much prospect of success from banging at the Knightsbridge gap again, *15th Panzer* moves south to attack Bir Hachem. *Trieste* moves out of the SRZ to join in. *Ariete* moves back into the SRZ in case it is needed for the attack next turn.<sup>5</sup> *21st Panzer* falls back to protect *15th* from any counterattacks from the Commonwealth's mobile forces.

*Pavia* has now reached the vicinity of Bir Hachem. It, *288th Assault Gun*, and *KG Heckler* stack together in order to try to clear the minefields on the western side of the French position. Further north, the Italian *9th* and *7th* infantry regiments move to the track outside the Sidi Muftah Box to try to clear the mines.

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clarification. However, until I learn otherwise, I will play the rules as written. Later: I have since received a clarification that units disrupted in their own combat phase have to wait until next turn to recover. I will implement this change from Turn 8 onward.

<sup>5</sup> There is a crucial hex south of Bir Hachem that can be reached only through the SRZ, because the on-map approaches are covered by the French brigade's ZoC. *Ariete* is stronger than *Trieste*, and so it would be preferable to have that division participate in the attack. In retrospect, it was clearly a mistake to bring *Ariete* onto the map in the previous turn.





Turn 6 Allied Combat

The RAF launches strikes against the two *panzer* divisions. *Regia Aeronautica* intercepts the attack on *21st Panzer* but fails to deflect the British aircraft. *21st Panzer* comes through unscathed, but the *15th's* *panzergrenadier* and recon units are disrupted.

The 2:1 attack on *21st Panzer* disrupts the units where they stand. At the end of the combat phase, they retreat one hex to the south. The disrupted *15th Panzer* units must also retreat from the French brigade's ZoC.

The French recover from disruption at the end of the player turn.

Now the Axis has to roll the first check for a refit turn. It will occur if the die roll is a 1. However, it is a 5, and so the game continues.





Turn 6 End

### Turn 7 (June 2)

Things are a mess for the Axis. The better part of two *panzer* divisions is disrupted, and they are wedged into a little corner between the edge of the map and the minefields.

*Regia Aeronautica* attempts a strike against Bir Hachem, but they are intercepted and shot down by the RAF.

*Pavia*, *288 AG*, and *KG Heckler* move into the minefield northwest of Bir Hachem. Although this will make them subject to bombardment, it will prevent the South Africans from reinforcing



the French without a fight. *15/90th Light* withdraws into the SRZ so that *Ariete* can stack with *15th Panzer's* panzer regiment in the attack on the French. (The plan is for *15/90th Light* to join *Trieste* next turn, if necessary.)



Turn 7 Axis Combat

The French get a +2 CF benefit from the box this time. The attack goes in at 3:1, with *Rommel* and the minefield canceling each other's column shifts. The result is another /R, disrupting the French (who never have to retreat).<sup>6</sup>

In the minefield phase, none of the bombarded units is affected. Neither do they clear the minefield. The units on the east side of Bir Hachem forgo any clearing attempts, as they are in enough trouble without risking more disruptions. Further north, *Brescia* clears the minefield in front of it.

In the recovery phase, all the German units are undisrupted.

4th South African enters the Knightsbridge Box. LRDG slips into the SRZ, because that's what those guys are supposed to do.

<sup>6</sup> Note also that Axis ZoCs don't extend into an intact box, and so the disrupted French do not have to retreat for that reason either.







attack 2nd Armour and 201st Guards. In the north, the Italian infantry try to pull together for mutual support.



Turn 8 Axis Combat

The attack on Bir Hachem merely disrupts the French again. *Pavia* is forced to retreat and is disrupted. *21st Panzer* inflicts a retreat result on its targets.

*15th Panzer* clears a minefield hex east of Bir Hachem. However, *288 AG* is disrupted by minefield bombardment.

*Sabratha* recovers from disruption.

It's strange that there's nothing in these rules to prevent the Commonwealth infantry from going on the offensive against the Italians. They continue to do so, with 2nd and 3rd South African, plus 151st Infantry, ganging up on *Trento*. The other Commonwealth infantry maneuver for better positions, including 69th, 150th, which leave their box in the south.

Around Bir Hachem, the Commonwealth is aiming to keep the *Panzers* from ganging up on the French. To that end, 4th, 7th, and 22nd Armour, along with 3rd Indian and the LRDG, attack *21st Panzer*. It may not be a good idea, but 6th South African slips into Bir Hachem to reinforce the garrison.





Turn 8 Infantry Combat

Both attacks cause retreats. *Trento* retreats through *Brescia*. *21st Panzer* is forced to retreat into the SRZ. After the combat phase the disrupted *288th AG*, which is in the ZoC of 6th South African, retreats into the same hex as *Pavia*.

In the recovery phase, the French, 2nd Armour, and 201st Guards become undisrupted.

The refit die roll is  $5+2=7$ , which is 6 or more. Thus, the next turn will be a refit turn.



We have a rules ambiguity here. Rule 8.7 says that disrupted units that are in enemy ZoCs at the end of the combat phase must retreat. However, the sequence of play says that the combat phase is not conducted in refit turns. Putting these together, I conclude that disrupted units need not retreat this turn. This seems odd. It's actually bad for the Axis, because they could have retreated into the SRZ, putting them in supply by the time the recovery phase occurred.<sup>7</sup>

In the recovery phase, *21st Panzer*, *Pavia*, *Trieste*, and *22nd Ariete* and the rest of *15th Panzer* are out of supply and do not recover. *Sabratha* does not make its refit die roll (the Italians need a "1"), and so it remains in the dead pile.

The first refit turn doesn't have any special effect on Commonwealth supply. They get the RAF back.

The infantry continues to maneuver to hem in the Italians. 2nd Armour and 201st Guards move into the rough terrain southwest of the Retima Box.

The RAF launches air strikes against *Rommel's* stack and the one containing *288th AG* and *Pavia*, just to reduce their mobility in the next turn. The Axis sends in its air to intercept. *Luftwaffe* forces the "raid on Rommel" to abort while *Regia Aeronautica* goes one better and shoots down the RAF.

Oddly enough for a Gazala game, the Commonwealth has suffered no losses up to this point. Thus, they have no refit rolls. The units which were disrupted by the Axis air strikes recover.

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<sup>7</sup> My interpretation was later confirmed by the designer on Consimworld.





Turn 9 End

### Turn 10 (June 5)

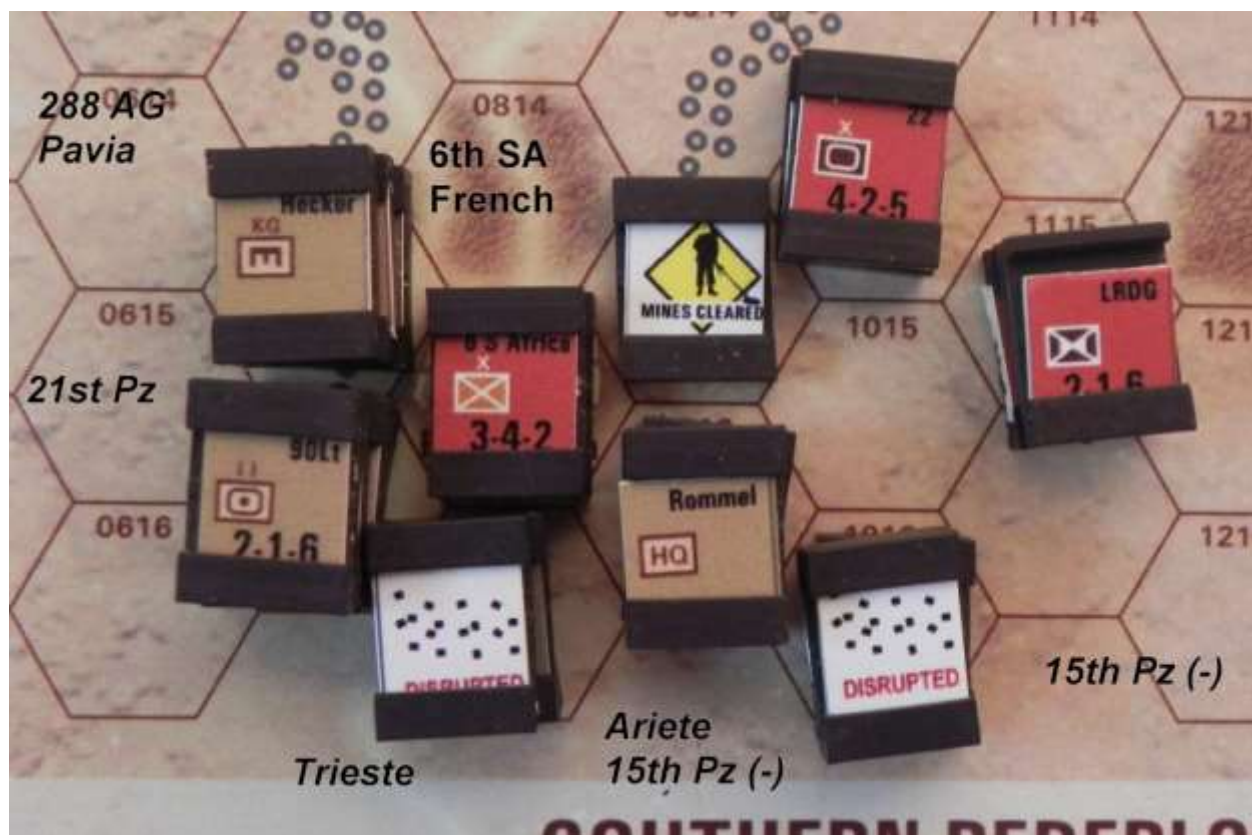
The on-map units disrupted by being out of supply last turn are still disrupted. All other Axis units are in supply.

*Luftwaffe* strikes at Bir Hachem, while *Regia Aeronautica* goes after the strongest Commonwealth stack. RAF tries to intercept the Italians and shoots them down. *Luftwaffe*'s strike has no effect.

The Italian infantry shuffles southward, with the idea that they might be useful protecting the mobile units' supply line. *21st Panzer* comes out of the SRZ and enters the minefield southwest of Bir Hachem. *Pavia* and *288th AG* enter the minefield northwest of that box. Together with *Rommel's* stack, they have another go at the French (and, now, South Africans).

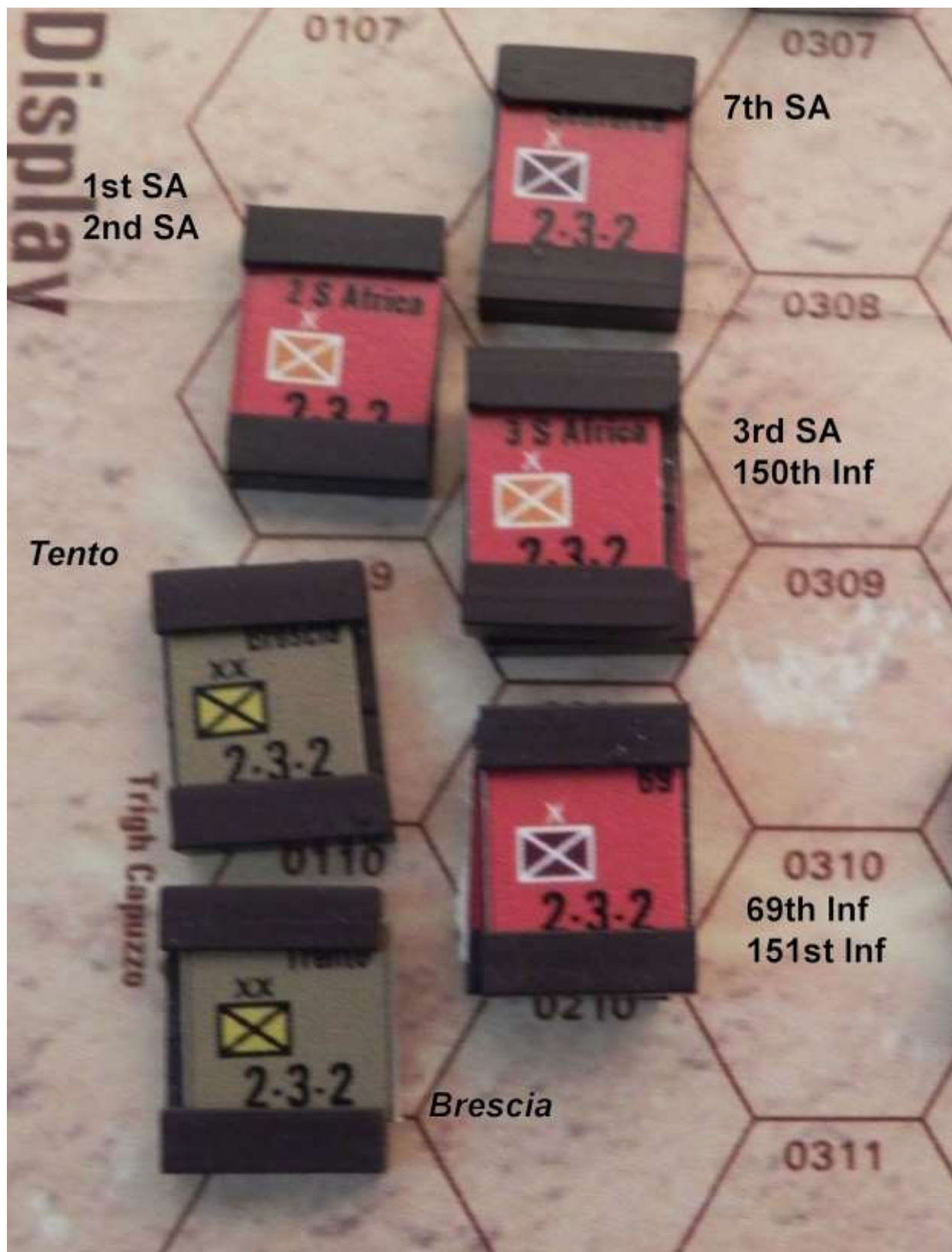
In the combat phase, the combined Axis forces merely disrupt the garrison.

*21st Panzer* clears the mines in its hex. This establishes a tenuous supply line, protected by the presence of Axis units, around Bir Hachem. Thus, the out of supply units are able to recover from disruption.



Turn 10 Axis Combat

The Commonwealth infantry continue to press the Italians. 2nd and 3rd South African, along with 150th, attack *Brescia*. *Trento* is attacked by 69th and 151st, mainly in an attempt to cut off *Brescia*'s retreat.



Turn 10 Commonwealth Infantry Combat



In the Bir Hachem scrum, the Commonwealth armour tries to break the siege. They mass their strongest units (2nd, 4th, 7th, and 22nd Armour) against *Rommel's* group, hoping that the RAF will score a hit to neutralize the Fox's columns shift. Meanwhile, 3rd Indian and 201st Guards soak off against *15th Panzer's* recon and *panzergrenadier* units. The LRDG again ducks into the SRZ, to look for an opportunity to cut Axis supply lines.



Turn 10 Commonwealth Combat

The *Luftwaffe* fails to deter the RAF, but the British aircraft get shot down before they can hurt the Axis. The Commonwealth attack goes in at 2:1 instead of 3:1, but it still forces *Rommel* and his boys to retreat into the SRZ. The soak-off attack has a mixed result, forcing the Germans to retreat but also disrupting the attackers.

On the western map edge, *Trento* is retreated, leaving *Brescia* exposed. However, a rereading of the rules reveals that the Italians may retreat off the west map edge, and so they escape destruction.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The fact that this rule became relevant shows that this game has an “edge of the world” problem. Both big battles are going on right at the map edge, and so it’s impossible for attacking units to surround the Axis.



Turn 10 End

In the recovery phase, the units in Bir Hachem become undisrupted.

I've decided to end the game at this point. All that's going on is the Axis is banging away at Bir Hachem, trying to get the lucky die roll that will eliminate the garrison. The Italian infantry is being rolled up by an improbable offensive by the British and South Africans. The British armour is entirely intact and capable of disrupting one *panzer* division every turn, which makes the Axis job that much harder. This isn't the Gazala I expected.

### Final Comments<sup>9</sup>

The last sentence I wrote during the AAR proper sums up my feelings about this game. It does not feel much like Gazala—or, at least, it does not feel like most other games on this battle. The rigid zones of control, lack of advance after combat, and lack of a mechanized movement or similar phase, add up to a static game.

<sup>9</sup> Due to real life issues, these comments were written some three months after finishing the game.

It is difficult to eliminate units, and so the massive losses that the British suffered in the first few days of the battle just don't happen. In the game I played, the only unit eliminated in ten turns of play was an Italian infantry division. The famously doomed 3rd Indian Mechanized Brigade, which is traditionally eliminated on the first turn of virtually every Gazala game, was in there pitching through the whole play. It would seem that the way to eliminate a unit is to get it disrupted and then hit it again. However, it's hard to set up a one-two punch like that with no advance after combat and recovery at the end of the unit's player turn.

There is no qualitative difference between armor and infantry. This was a battle where tanks dominated and maneuvered like fleets at sea. In this game they are certainly faster, but they aren't a lot stronger and receive no special bonuses with respect to infantry.

You never have the historical situation where the Commonwealth armour is essentially broken (for at time), allowing the Axis to turn west and open up their supply lines from the rear.

I am puzzled. This is a game by an experienced, respected designer. It has gone through a number of editions. Did I miss something crucial? Was there some trick embedded in the rules that would allow the historical Axis sweep? In the end, I can't tell if I was just playing it wrong, or there just isn't anything there.