

RAF Variant Rules #1.45 Mar 2014

By Simon D Blackwell

Introduction

These rules are the final updated and expanded version of my earlier submissions #1.0-#1.4. They now incorporate the Miles Master M.24 Emergency fighter, as well as a tweak to the stats of the Fw.200. Also included are all the previous new aircraft types and the hypothetical ones of which all either were or could have been seen over the skies of Sussex, Kent and the Thames estuary in 1940. I was prompted to write these rules after playing the original game a few times and dimly remembering a turret armed British fighter that had no forward firing machine guns. The fighter in question was the Boulton Paul Defiant of which 2 Sqns served in the Battle of Britain. Left out of the game I suspect owing to its combat record which can only be described as disastrous I decided for historical accuracy more than attempting to change the balance of the game to introduce these much maligned aircraft to the game. After a few plays my appetite was whetted sufficiently to research introducing other aircraft not featured in the original game. As the reader will note from the sheer number of new aircraft types listed below, this became a much larger project than originally envisaged but proved far more interesting and enjoyable.

I also decided to keep from the original variant rules just 1 elite RAF Sqn as there is an alternative unit to choose from that has the same stats as the withdrawn unit (263 Sqn Whirlwind). The aim with these rules is solely to provide extra flavour or chrome to the game so that players may cherry pick whatever units they wish in order to meet their criteria and add an element of variation to the original game. I have listed the aircraft in an approximate order that I would use if gradually introducing them over a number of games with the most marginal/hypothetical ones at the end.

This list of new aircraft is not exhaustive as I had to stop at some point so I drew a line to exclude those that either would be too similar to units already in play (e.g. DO217) or that were too marginal and similar to other new aircraft types introduced (e.g. Ar196 floatplane). A final point regarding the actual counters, at the moment I have no way of reproducing these to the standard I would like, so for the time being they are a rough and ready MS paint conversion job. I am converting to 3d representations using 1/600 model aircraft produced by the excellent Tumbling Dice manufacturer although at some point in the future I hope to be able to produce better quality counters unless someone beats me to it!

PART 1 – Enter the Poles & Defiants

Elite RAF 303 Pol Sqn



Clearly during the Battle of Britain some Sqns outperformed others. I have taken one of the most famous and successful Sqns and made them stronger (only at full strength) in offensive capability to reflect their elite status.

303 (Polish) Sqn. claimed to be the highest scoring RAF Sqn during the battle with confirmed kills for the heroic Poles ranging between 55-60 although the pilots themselves claimed some 126 kills between them. Notably the Czech loner ace Josef Frantisek (17 Kills) chose to remain with his Polish comrades rather than transfer to 310 (Czech) Sqn. The Sqns success can be attributed to the fact that many pilots were veterans already while serving in the pre-war Polish Air Force and had already had vigorous training compared to the raw RAF recruits with little more than a handful of flying hour's experience.

Implementation & conditions

Simply switch the top side of the existing reinforcement Sqn for the counter below. The front/ready combat rating has been increased by 1 point to 3. When in their fatigued state they revert to that of the original fatigued counter (i.e. combat strength of just 1).

This unit may only be introduced after 1RCAF Sqn has been brought in as reinforcement. This is due to the fact that the British High Command originally viewed the Poles and Czechs and other foreign pilots with suspicion compared to the Commonwealth volunteers and didn't trust them (until desperate) with their precious fighters.

RAF 264 & 141 Sqns – Boulton Paul Defiants



The concept of this aircraft was to have a 2 seat single engine fighter with its entire armament concentrated in a massive power operated turret allowing the gunner with no responsibility for flying the aircraft to traverse his battery of guns through 360 degrees thus giving him more chance of hitting his target than a pilot who had to point his aircraft at it. A deeply flawed idea it very quickly became evident that this division of responsibility did not work as envisaged as the pilot not only had to fly the aircraft but think in abstract terms of his gunner's line of sight. The idea should have ended after trials but owing to the desperate shortage of fighters the Defiant having been extensively developed was brought into service in October 1939 with 264 Sqn. Operational results and heavy losses in the Battle for France proved the shortcomings of this unhappy machine yet in June 1940 a second Sqn was formed #141. In its first engagement in July 1940, 2 Defiants were shot down on the first firing pass with Bf 109E's and 4 more as the 109's took advantage of the blind spot from the rear and below. 264 Sqn was thrown into the maelstrom of battle in Aug 1940 and was left with only 3 serviceable aircraft in a week. Both were then withdrawn from further action and switched to that of a night fighter/interceptor which it performed far more successfully.

Implementation & conditions

Both 264 & 141 Sqns (or just 1 if you like) are placed at the start of the game as day fighters in their appropriate sectors using the -1, -2 counters.

Immediately at the point of elimination or with a heavy damage result on either Sqn switch both counters to the Night-Fighter version (0, -1 fatigued side). From that point onwards they operate exactly the same as the Blenheim's except that once switched to the Night-fighter role, these Sqns cannot be used for day fighter interceptions. If the other Sqn is on patrol when another is eliminated or damaged, it immediately lands and is changed to the Night Fight counter on its fatigued side.

When eliminated they are placed on the first available Blenheim calendar track.

Focke-Wulf Fw 200 Condor



The Fw200 was unusual for the Luftwaffe in that it was a heavy 4 engined bomber. Developed from the state airliner before the war this handsome aerodynamic airplane dubbed by Winston Churchill as the "Scourge of the Atlantic" for its contribution to allied shipping losses during the Battle of the Atlantic also played a minor role during the Battle of Britain as a regular bomber. During August its role was switched to anti-ship operations.

Implementation & conditions

Place at the start of the game with LF3 in the He111 ready box. Immediately roll 2d6. The result is the number of days the unit is available before being withdrawn to shipping duties. Note the calendar track and when that day is reached, withdraw the unit. If eliminated prior to this date, withdraw permanently at that point.

This bomber only takes part in raids with He111's and only after they have all been selected INCLUDING FATIGUED ONES from LF3. If the Force card requires more He111's than available, then select the Fw200.

The FW200 may participate in night raids after all He111's have been selected.

Henschel Hs 126



A 2 seat reconnaissance plane used during the Battle of Britain perhaps most famous from the British perspective during the battle as one was a victim of RAF ace Eric Lock who won his medal bar to the DFC after successfully shooting it down. The aircraft was subsequently replaced in 1942 by the STOL Fieseler Fi 156 Storch.

Implementation & conditions

On the 1st time that the Event "Patrolling Sqn catches Recon Flight" is drawn, instead of following the card instructions, place this unit in the bomber box and if a patrolling sqn from 1/11, 2/11, 6/11 or 7/11 is available conduct a normal combat against it. The unit is eliminated permanently if destroyed for **1 VP**. If the same event is drawn again before the unit is available owing to previous heavy damage, revert to the official rules instructions for this event. If however it is in a fatigued state in the LF2 box it must be used.

PART 2 – The Fleet Air Arm, Blenheims to Beaufighters & German Seaplanes

FAA 808 Sqn - Fairey Fulmar



Similar in appearance to its sister the Battle and similarly lacking in performance it nevertheless proved a reliable carrier borne aircraft with an effective eight machine gun armament. 808 Naval Air Sqn of the Fleet Air Arm was one of 2 Naval Sqns to participate in the Battle of Britain. Formed in July 1940 it was assigned to Fighter Commands 13 Group operating as a land based sqn from the Isle of Man & RAF Castletown patrolling the Western approaches and the Irish Sea. In October the Sqn embarked on the carrier HMS Ark Royal bound for the Mediterranean. This rule assumes that owing to the criticality of the situation, the Sqn is transferred to 12 Group in an attempt to stem the tide.

Implementation & conditions

Roll 1d6 and starting from the 18th Sep, count forward on the calendar track the resulting number thrown. Mark this new date with a token. This is the date that the Sqn is permanently withdrawn and assigned to Ark Royal. Next, place the Sqn counter on the 21st Aug calendar track. When this day is reached check the current VP score. If the tally is minus 15 or lower, the Sqn becomes available and is placed fatigued in the 3/12 Group sector. If the VP score is higher, move the counter to the next day and repeat the procedure at the start of that day. Continue until the Sqn either becomes available or its removal date is reached at which point remove it from play permanently. If the VP score rises above minus 15 while the counter is in play it cannot be used for patrolling as it is considered temporarily grounded by Fighter Command and not worth risking the loss of valuable pilots. This rule does not include a current patrol if the unit has already been assigned to one and under these circumstances comes into play upon the Sqn landing.

If eliminated in combat it is removed from play permanently (assumed to be rebuilt and assigned to Ark Royal).

RAF 604 Sqn – Bristol Beaufighter conversion



Originally equipped with MG armed Bristol Blenheims when reassigned as a Night-Fighter, this Sqn was one of the first (of the featured ones in this game) to convert to Bristol Beaufighters late in September 1940. The Beaufighter boasted 4x20mm cannons and improved radio location equipment. During the Blitz this Sqn accounted for 50 enemy aircraft during night raids.

Implementation & conditions

This Sqn converts to Beaufighters after 1st Sep. Place the counter on the calendar track for this day. On the 1st roll 1d20 (or 3d6 if you don't have a d20) and counting from 1st Sep, move the counter forward the appropriate number of days. Once the day counter reaches the date on which the Unit is placed it finishes converting to Beaufighters and is operational with them with immediate effect. Switch the original counter for the new one.

If this Sqn takes part in an attempted interception you may add 1 to the interception chance after you roll the die. This modifier cannot be made in addition to 600 Sqn's from the original rules, i.e. if both Sqns participate in the same interception attempt, only a single +1 modifier is permitted. If the roll is less than the required interception chance then this Sqn must intercept (exactly the same as the conditions for 600 Sqn).

Heinkel He 115



The largest, most powerful seaplane used in quantity by the Luftwaffe during the war was like many of its contemporaries obsolete from the start. Designed for patrolling, torpedo and bombing missions it was always too slow and poorly armed to stand a chance against modern fighters. Despite this it was extremely strong and handled well. After service in the Norwegian campaign, KuFlGr506 operated as part of Luftflotte 5's bomber force carrying out raids against England across the North Sea as well as mine laying operations in the Thames Estuary and Bristol Channel. From October the unit moved to the Bay of Biscay carrying out anti-ship patrols before being gradually phased out by the Blohm & Voss BV138.

Implementation & conditions

Both Gruppe's are placed together on the calendar 1d6 days ahead of the 11th Aug start date. When the day counter reaches this date these Gruppe's immediately become available. Place them on the left hand side of the board, near the LF2 boxes. If up to 2 other eliminated bomber gruppe's were due to be placed on this date, their entry must be delayed to the next entry point for their respective aircraft on the calendar track.

The HE115's may only be placed when a minor raid is selected AND the raid switches partially or completely to a secondary one. Fighter cover if eligible is provided by LF 2 109's &/or 110's. The bombers may only raid against the following coastal targets:- **Dunwich**-radar, **Walton**-radar, **Southend**-City, **Sheerness**-Port and **Foreness**-radar. The first opportunity that these criteria are met, substitute up to 2 LF2 bombers (except JU87's) for 1 or 2 HE115's.

If eliminated, these Gruppe's are permanently removed from the game.

Heinkel He 59



Another floatplane, designed in 1930 as a reconnaissance bomber, which found itself at the outbreak of war already obsolete. Used primarily as a trainer, its role during the Battle of Britain is controversial. Operating in all-white schemes and bearing civilian registrations and red crosses they flew aircrew rescue missions over the Channel. The British claimed that they were in reality using the excuse to lay mines across the Thames estuary and land German agents and therefore declared them legitimate targets. Several were shot down before the Luftwaffe reverted them to military colour schemes.

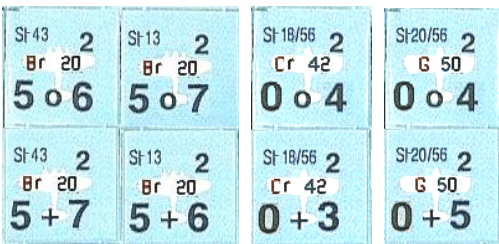
Implementation & conditions

This unit should be kept to the side near the LF2 boxes. It may only be played on drawing the “Snap raid by Egr/210/2” event and only if the original unit is fatigued or in the rest or damaged boxes. Draw a target card but limiting to only ports in LF2 aor (to signify mining of port harbours). Do not draw Force or event cards for this operation. Subtract 2 from the detection die-roll.

If eliminated, permanently remove the unit but only gain 1 VP.

PART 3 – Ali Fasciste – The Corpo Aereo Italiano (CAI)

Fiat Br.20 Cicogna, Fiat Cr.42 Falco & Fiat G.50 Freccia



The CAI or “Italian Air Corps” was the Expeditionary arm of the regular Regia Aeronautica Italian Air force that participated in the Battle of Britain in the final months of 1940 achieving limited success. Formed on 10th Sep 1940, the first aircraft arrived at their bases in Belgium on 25th Sep. The first raids were conducted on 24th Oct which continued on a minor scale until redeployment between Jan-Apr 1941. Although all aircraft that took part were by this time obsolescent compared to modern fighters they were not hopelessly outclassed but more let down by reliability issues as oppose aircraft design.

The bombing arm was made up of 2 Stormo’s (Wings) #13 & #43 of Fiat Br20 Cicogna’s (Stork) twin engined bombers comprising 70-80 aircraft. The fighter Stormo #20 comprised the Fiat CR42 Falco (Falcon) and Fiat G.50 Freccia (Arrow). The CR42 was a capable biplane, that handled very well. Its chief flaw being its armament of only 2 mg’s. The G.50 although in appearance a modern aircraft was developed before the CR.42 and suffered badly owing to its open cockpit which affected performance as well as lack of radio and no armour protection.

Implementation & conditions

Place all CAI units on the 25th Sep calendar track. When the day marker reaches this date, the CAI is operational and available for use. Immediately place the counters place the units to the side of the LF2 Gruppe boxes on their fatigued side.

The CAI operates in LF2’s aor. On any raid in this area consisting of 4 or less units, you may select the CAI as the raiders instead of the luftwaffe who may only provide channel cover if required. Substitute Fiat BR20’s for any German bomber, the Fiat CR42 for ME109’s (place in hunter box) and the Fiat G50 for ME110’s (place in the close escort box). If a raid is beyond ME109 range and the Force card calls for a 109, place the Fiat CR42 in the close escort box instead (after the G50 has been selected).

After selecting the RAF interceptors and drawing the event card but prior to conducting the raid, roll 1d6 for each CAI unit taking part. On a roll of 6, immediately return that unit to the off board area and flip to fatigued (or put in rest box if already fatigued). This/these unit(s) have suffered mechanical problems and have had to abort and return to base without reaching their target.

If the Fiat G50 is eliminated in combat, permanently remove it from the game. If other CAI units are eliminated, place on the calendar track 1d3 days (rounding up) ahead of the current date. If still within the game period they return at this point at fatigued status.

PART 4 – Hypothetical units

RAF 263 Sqn - Westland Whirlwind



During the Battle of Britain, 263 Sqn was based with 13 Group at Grangemouth, Dyce and in September Turnhouse where it operated Hurricanes. However by mid August, the Sqn began converting to a prototype British aircraft, the Westland Whirlwind. A twin engined heavy fighter and the RAF's first purpose built cannon-armed fighter. The 4x20mm cannons made it the most heavily armed fighter of its time while also being one of the fastest. However the aircraft was plagued with development problems with its Rolls Royce Peregrine engines and thus only moved to 10 Group's St Eval station in November 1940.

To implement this unit it is assumed that ACM Dowding has been persuaded to allow the fighter to prove its worth (as oppose his actual veto stating "there was no room for passengers") and so it is rushed to a forward station to take part.

Implementation & conditions

Place the counter on the 1st Sep calendar track. When the day marker reaches this day, roll 1d20 (or 3d6 if you don't have a d20) and counting from 1st Sep, move the counter forward the appropriate number of days. Once the day counter reaches the new date, 263 Sqn becomes operational and is placed fatigued in the 1/10 sector. The unit operates from that point on as a regular RAF fighter Sqn.

Anytime the Sqn receives light damage, instead of placing in the rest box on its fatigued side after combat, place the unit in the damage box BUT on its ready side. This is to signify the additional time required to repair the aircraft owing to issues with the Peregrine engines and lack of ground crew expertise with this novel aircraft.

Optional It costs the same amount of VP's to enter the Whirlwind as that of a Spitfire depending on the date of entry.

RAF 5 OTU – Miles Master



The Miles Master was the advanced trainer for fighter pilots who would eventually deploy to Spitfire or Hurricane Sqn's during the Battle of Britain. A two seat monoplane that was for its time fast, strong and manoeuvrable it was an excellent platform for novice pilots to learn their trade on. Concern that front line fighter factory production would be hampered by German bombing raids led to the RAF requiring a number of the aircraft converted as emergency fighters. Designated the Miles Master M.24 they had a single seat configuration and were armed with 6 m.g's. Performance was at least comparable with the Gloster Gladiator. Some 26 were converted but owing to the successful dispersal of the British aircraft manufacturing industry, they were never called on to fulfil their new role. This unit is based on an historical Operational

Training Unit (OTU) that was based in 10 Group during the battle and that had Masters on strength. For game purposes it is held in reserve and available to roll out if the situation becomes dire enough.

Implementation & conditions

This unit is placed during the reinforcement phase (in addition to other regular units) whenever the VP counter first drops to -25. Place it on its fatigued side in the 3/10 sector.

If eliminated in combat, lose a single Victory Point. It may be rebuilt once more. Place the unit fatigued in the British Damage box and cycle it through the normal relief stages until it returns to play. If eliminated a second time, remove from the game permanently for the loss of another single Victory Point.

RAF 71 (Eagle) Sqn – F2A Brewster Buffalo



At the start of the war before the US entered, large numbers of American volunteers travelled to the UK offering their services. Formed into "Eagle" sqns, no. 71 was formed in September 1940. They were equipped with the F2A Brewster Buffalo. Appraisal compared to contemporary British fighters was negative in almost all aspects and the aircraft were deemed unsuitable for European theatre combat. By November 1940 the Sqn had converted to the Hurricane becoming operational in Feb 1941. This rule supposes that owing to operational requirements, the Sqn becomes operational in September 1940.

Implementation & conditions

Place the counter on the 19th Sep calendar track. When the day marker reaches this day, roll 1d6 and counting from 19th Sep, move the counter forward the appropriate number of days. Once the day counter reaches the new date, 71 Sqn becomes operational and is placed fatigued in the 3/12 sector. The unit operates from that point on as a regular RAF fighter Sqn. If eliminated it is removed from play permanently (assumed to being rebuilt with Hurricanes outside the date scope of the game).

RAF Meteorological Flt - Gloster Gauntlet



The Gloster Gauntlet was the RAF's premier fighter in the early 1930's and the last with an open cockpit. The penultimate biplane in service it was succeeded by its more famous (biplane) relative, the Gloster Gladiator armed with 4 mg's as oppose the Gauntlets 2. At the outbreak of war, frontline Sqns had replaced it with Spitfires, Hurricanes and Gladiators. However many were retained and given to new units as trainers prior to receiving newer fighters. Gauntlets were also used by Meteorological Flts and it is a generic one of these that the unit represents. The scenario here is that for this unit to come into play, the RAF's existing numbers have dwindled to such levels that they are forced to bring out of mothballs obsolete aircraft to try to stem the tide.

Implementation & conditions

This unit is placed during the reinforcement phase (in addition to other regular units) whenever the VP counter first drops to -30. Place it on its fatigued side in the 2/12 sector.

If ever eliminated in combat it is removed from the game permanently but for only the loss of 1 Victory Point.

Henschel Hs 123



The Hs123 was an excellent biplane employed in a dive bomber and ground support role during the early campaigns of WWII and was still in use into 1944 when a lack of parts eventually led to its retirement. The aircraft had been so successful during the Polish campaign that plans to replace it were reversed. With further glory achieved in the Netherlands and French campaigns its place was secured. The aircraft's chief shortcoming was its limited range and thus the English Channel proved to be a formidable obstacle. This unit has therefore been included as a hypothetical one where Hs123's are teamed up with Ju87's to bomb coastal targets at the limit of their range.

Implementation & conditions

Use this counter at the start of your campaign, placing it in the Ju87 box of LF2. Place it when a raid includes Ju87's but ONLY if there are not enough non-fatigued Ju87's to meet the raid criteria.

Furthermore, owing to its limited range the only targets the Hs123 may bomb are **Foreness-Radar**, **Dover-Port**, **Rye-Radar**, **Eastbourne-Port**, **Beachy Head-Radar** and **Brighton-Port**. If after selection a secondary target is chosen that is not one of the aforementioned, the unit returns to base fatigued, and takes no part in the raid.

If eliminated in combat it is removed from the game permanently.

Final Notes

My chief source of reference is the Book "The Battle of Britain" by Richard Bickers, published by Salamander (ISBN 0-86101-477-4). It provides an excellent introduction to England's darkest hour broken down into chapters on aircraft (with beautiful cut-aways and colour plates) of the belligerents, the opposing personnel, tactics, formation diagrams and detail and diary of the battle. For the Luftwaffe, I used "Warplanes of the Luftwaffe" by David Donald, published Aeospace Publishing (ISBN 1-874023-56-5) again handsomely illustrated with colour plates and b/w photographs and cut-aways.

So there you have it, hopefully with the caveats I've set and late entry dates for some units none of them will affect the game that significantly. My suggestion as noted above would be to introduce a few at a time and see how you get on.

