NEW WEATHER RULES FOR FLAT TOP

(by Ryan Schutz, republished with his permission**)**

Despite FT's incredible complexity and detail it lacks accurate tropical weather rules. The hot tropical region covered by the many scenarios of FT is one of seasonal "monsoonal" winds. This means that the winter and summer wind patterns are nearly 180 degrees opposite of each other. In game terms, the printed wind direction rose on the game map represents only the summer (southern hemisphere) monsoon and is not valid for the winter months of the year. Additionally, other weather patterns you would expect in higher latitudes, such as warm and cold fronts, do not usually exist in the tropics.

At first glance many gamers might think "so what", but veteran FT players know the significance weather plays in the game from impeding searches to determining the direction of optimum CV movement for aircraft launches. As a Naval Oceanographer (In the Navy, we pull double duty as both oceanographers and meteorologists). I am perhaps concerned more than most about this kind of thing and its flaws, in an otherwise excellent game. I do not mean to add any more complexity to FT, or to add a mini-forecasting module to the game. All we need to do is to adjust the current FT weather rules slightly, including the Wind Direction Table and Cloud Movement Table, to more accurately reflect nature's true pattern for this region of the world. The basic framework of the current weather system and its effect on play in the game remains unchanged.

Wind Direction

Wind Direction, Rule 6.2, is changed to use table below for the initial wind direction dependent upon the month of the scenario is being played. Additionally, when rolling on the Wind Change Table (located on Players Aid Card #2), a DR1 is changed to read "the wind direction returns to the original direction at game start".

Initial Wind Direction Table

Month	Wind Direction (Map Quadrant Direction)
Jan-Feb	No change from printed roses
Mar	As printed, except: IV:4; VII:6
Apr	As printed, except: III:4; IV:5; VII:6; VIII:6
May-Sep	All map quadrants:6
Oct	All map quadrants:6; except I:1; II:1
Nov	I:2; II:2; III:4; IV:5; V-VIII:6
Dec	No change from printed roses

For "design your own" scenarios, simply choose a month for the game; this determines the wind direction in each quadrant at game start. The appropriate months for the scenarios presented in the game are:
Scenario 1 – Rings Around Rabaul: Feb
Scenario 2 – Coral Sea: May
Scenario 3 – Eastern Solomons: Aug
Scenario 4 – Santa Cruz: Oct
Scenario 5 – Guadalcanal: Nov

Cloud Markers

Section 6.3, Cloud Markers, needs to have some minor changes. A cloud "fronts" pattern is not a valid type for the tropics and should be eliminated entirely. The only realistic pattern is "scattered" clouds. Additionally, when using the new Wind Direction Table as presented earlier in this article, replace the Cloud Movement Table on Players Aid Card #2 with the one below:

Cloud Movement Table

DR	Result
1	Same sector
2-3	Sector cloud was heading towards
4	Nov-Apr: Sector I; May-Oct: Sector VIII
5	Nov-Apr: Sector II; May-Oct: Sector VII
6	Nov-Apr: Sector V; May-Oct: Sector VI

NB. The above changes are only valid for the tropics. Thus the Midway and Wake variants for FT, as published in The General, can use the wind and cloud rules as presented in the rule book.