

THE 1776 THESIS

By Jonathon Lockwood



Jonathan Lockwood has been a wargamer of the classic school for a long time as evidenced by his four straight fourth round eliminations in each of the AH CLASSIC 500 tournaments in the first four ORIGINS. His "classicist", or "perfect plan" if you prefer, approach to 1776 will be serialized in three parts of which the following comprises the introduction.

1776 is a wargame employing many new design features which set it quite apart from classic AH games of a similar period in history. The feature which I find most striking is the interchangeability of units of varying combat values. That is, 5 1-7's or 1-8's are just as potent a fighting force in sustained combat as a single 5 factor unit. The most beneficial effect this has is to eliminate strategies and tactical placements based upon a combat unit's numerical value, as in *WATERLOO*. (EXAMPLE: Steinmetz is ideal for holding the center of the Quatres Bras heights because it is an 8-4. OR: PAA cavalry units are excellent as delaying units because they are 1-6's).

COMBAT RESULTS TABLE: If one were to remove the extreme ends of the table, (0-3 and 7-10) combat would become a very staid affair hauntingly similar to that in *1914*. (And about as dull). However, throw in AH's Tactical Results Matrix and things are livened up quite a bit. The decisive edge in combat now turns, not quite so much on the single roll of a die, but on how well one can gauge his opponent's probable tactical maneuver and reply with an appropriate tactical countermeasure. An analysis of these tactics follows:

FRONTAL ASSAULT: Actually a rather conservative tactic, this is most effective against a numerically inferior force (3-1 or better). It can also serve as the decisive riposte to an opponent who attempts to break off combat prematurely by withdrawing. (Add 3 to die roll.) It also has the advantage of limiting your own risk, since no matter what your opponent does, you can lose no more than 2 from the die roll (with the exception of militia fighting Regulars.)

RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE: This tactic is exactly what its name implies. It is simply a more cautious type of frontal assault. While the potential risk to the attacker is somewhat lessened, the potential gains are also limited. This tactic's chief value lies in its use as a probe to gain information about your opponents' tactical inclinations without as much risk of getting burnt.

ENFILADE RIGHT AND ENFILADE LEFT: These tactics consist of simple flanking maneuvers against your opponent's left or right. While possibly very rewarding, they carry potential disaster unless you have become very familiar with your opponents' habits in combat.

REFUSE THE LEFT AND RIGHT: These maneuvers are risky countermeasures against an enfilading force unless you have a fairly good idea of which side of your line your opponent likes to go for. As the attacker, these maneuvers are useful for curing a defender of counterattacking your flank too often when used in conjunction with the frontal assault.

STAND AND DEFEND: A conservative defensive maneuver entailing not as much risk as refusing a flank or withdrawing, it is similar to the

reconnaissance in force in that its potential gains are also limited. As the attacker, you will find little use for this tactic except as an occasional substitute for the recon gambit.

WITHDRAW: Here is the tactic that can prove to be the American's game-saver. Taking a careful look at the Tactical Results Matrix, we find that against every tactic except Frontal Assault, a withdrawal will break off combat with no tactical advantage gained by your opponent! (Exception: A Recon maneuver will add 2 to your opponent's die roll.)

Of course, the greatest danger involved in this choice lies in the possibility that your opponent may choose to launch a frontal assault, in which case he adds 3 to his die roll, and you get burned again. One method of countering this possibility (If you know that your opponent is fond of frontal assaults) is to launch an enfilade right or left in response to his expected frontal assault. Since this subtracts 2 from his die roll, this will cause him to think twice about using the same tactic again, especially in a critical 1-1 or 3-2 battle. Sooner or later he will become tired of getting burned on a frontal assault and will vary his tactics. That is when you can attempt to break off combat through withdrawal. Of course this knowledge can work to the British commander's advantage as well, by patiently slugging away at the American hoping to crush him if he attempts to withdraw.

SPECIAL UNITS: Supply units in 1776 are fairly similar to those in *AFRIKA KORPS*, with the exception that your supply unit must be in the same stack as your attacking combat units. Where only one side has a supply unit, that side pretty much holds the initiative. Where both sides have supplies, it is a matter of personal choice whether or not to withhold supplies. An example of this kind of situation follows:

Suppose a British force of 10 factors attacks an equal force of American Continentals. Both sides are supplied. According to the rules regarding supply, a given side may employ supply once during a combat phase without having to remove the supply from the board. The British player does not have much flexibility here. He has to use his supply or fight at half strength. For the American, however, there are interesting alternatives. He can use his supply to repel the first attack, hoping to discourage the attacker. Failing in that, the American can withhold supply the second time around, trying to break off combat from the British. This move is not as foolhardy as it may seem. 2-1 odds for the defender does not necessarily mean certain destruction for the Americans. Furthermore, in order to achieve those odds, the British player must use his supply a second time, leaving him without supply in succeeding turns. If the American succeeds in breaking off combat, he will still have his supply unit and be able to counterattack the British, who are now forced to defend at half strength!

ENTRENCHMENTS AND FORTIFICATIONS: These units are invaluable to the British as an aid in consolidating their control over strategic towns. Forts must be used to securely control an area against incursions by either side. It also helps if your forts are supplied, since it doesn't make too much sense to build a fort in the first place if lack of supply is going to cancel out its advantages. Where forts are not readily available, and you are conducting a buildup of forces in the

area for an extended period of time, entrenchments are practically mandatory. While not affording as much protection as a full fledged fort, they are easy to construct even when there are no supplies.

MAGAZINES: Invaluable on defense, since a magazine cannot be exhausted as a source of supply, and hence is never removed from the board unless captured or destroyed. It also has the advantage of conversion, it being possible to convert a magazine into a mobile supply unit and use it in mobile combat the same turn. A good use for the British is as a permanent supply source for a critical fort.

ARTILLERY: This is a rather clumsy unit to use in mobile combat unless the fort is nearby or the unit itself is transported, the artillery unit serves as an added enhancement to a defensive position by decreasing the die roll of the attacker 1 for every artillery unit present (Unless the attacker has artillery units to counterbalance this). Artillery units are the slowest moving pieces in either army, and share with the supply unit the additional disadvantage of not being able to force march. They are useless against troops in the open, so an artillery unit's usual proper place is in the home (fort).

BATEAUX: The transport that makes possible for the American adventures that he otherwise would not dare think about. Things such as the invasion of Canada, for instance. Unless you leave an escort behind for protecting these fellows, they become easy prey for some die-hard enemy factor. This is a must optional rule if you want anything like a balanced game in certain scenarios, and especially if you want realism in the campaign game. They do have an advantage over trucks in *PANZERBLITZ* in that a bateau can dump its cargo and run, provided there are no enemy combat troops in the area where it unloads.

Most of the foregoing analysis is to provide background for the wargamer who usually does pretty well in the beginning stages of a game, but who always seems to get beaten by an opponent who finds some little quirk in the rules and turns it to his advantage. Now we shall see how this analysis can be applied in the various scenarios and in the campaign.

SCENARIO #1: INVASION OF CANADA—1775

AMERICANS: The colonists indeed have a hard row to hoe in this scenario if they want a victory. A more attainable goal is a draw, since freeing St. Johns, Montreal, and Quebec of all enemy combat units requires either an imbecile for a British commander or ungodly luck with the die. The rules which give the Americans a chance are the Forced March and bateaux. Simply load all five RM, supply, and artillery units into the two bateaux provided at Ticonderoga and sail away. To where? St. Johns is a possible target, but the three factors in the fort are supplied by adjacent Montreal, and therefore doubled. 1-2 odds, even adding one for the artillery unit, (which is immediately cancelled out by the presence of British Regulars) simply do not warrant a long siege of St. Johns. The 1 BR and TM guarding the magazine at Montreal is a better target, since once the magazine supplying St. Johns is captured, the units in the fort will be unsupplied, and their defensive advantage nullified. However, the most daring move is to sail with the bateaux straight for Quebec! It is unmanned by British Regulars, therefore the militia do not suffer the usual penalty in engaging the Tory garrison. 2-1

odds can be obtained against the fort, and you quickly take out the major stronghold for the British. The troops at Ft. Western should force march straight for St. Johns and prepare for a climactic finish. The worst the Americans should do is to draw.

BRITISH: If the Americans make a sudden dash for Quebec, force march 2 BR to Quebec in an effort to beat them there. Failing in that, force march all reinforcements toward Montreal and try to smash the separated Americans before they can unite. If you should lose all 3 cities to the Americans turn in your Brown Bess.

SCENARIO #2: SARATOGA CAMPAIGN—1777

BRITISH: The British forces at start are confronted by scattered American forces. On the first move the British should seize every opportunity to crush a fair portion of American strength before the colonists succeed in withdrawing out of reach to threaten your occupied cities at game's end. For a British victory is dependent upon whether the American can seize one of your vital towns for victory, (New York, West Point, Ticonderoga) OR two of either of those three towns or Fort Stanwix, Albany, and Philadelphia. On turn 1 as much of the British force at St. Johns as possible should move on Ticonderoga, whether by Bateau or force march (preferably the former). If you can't get 3-2 odds on the fort the first move, besiege it until the rest of the force at St. Johns catches up. West Point and Ft. Constitution should be crushed immediately at 4-1 or better. Send a modest force to sea to threaten Philadelphia. What you can't attack immediately, threaten by force marching a force toward it. What you must keep in mind is that for the first two British turns, you outnumber the American 2-1. Use that superiority to flush the colonists out of the area, and then entrench, keeping a mobile force busy pursuing and harassing the Americans. The last turn is critical, as you must anticipate where your opponent will strike and move your mobile force there to meet him. Then when the colonists attack, YOU can now choose the proper moment to break off combat and win!

AMERICANS: This is a classical exercise in how to win by running like a jackrabbit. You are initially confronted by numerically superior, concentrated British Regulars. Where practicable, you should avoid combat. Wherever possible, you should break off combat if the British force it on you. (Bearing in mind, of course, the ever present possibility of your opponent catching you with a frontal assault). Philadelphia is the city in a most vulnerable position for a hit-and-run raid. It can also serve as a good place for a concentrated American as it has few easy avenues of approach for the British. Terrain and an aggressive British player will often dictate that you have two, and possibly three striking forces in being. Simply staying out of reach is not enough. You must continually force march, threatening a different city each time, or attacking a city in order to draw the striking force of the British in that direction. Try not to be drawn into prolonged combat before the last turn, as this just plays into the hands of the British. Your last turn decides your victory or defeat. When you do attack, remember that it is in the British interests to break off combat.

SCENARIO #3: GREEN'S SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN—1780

BRITISH: In this situation the British are really hurting. Although the American forces confronting you are scattered over much of the board, the use of the inverted decoys by the Americans in conjunction with the special Rain rule is going to make effective

pursuit of the colonials next to impossible. In addition, you do not have a decisive superiority in numbers (19 British and Tory factors to 15 American, not counting the two CA reinforcements). This means that you must, in effect, go on a "search and destroy" hunt against suspected colonial positions on the first two or three moves in order to do any damage to the Americans before they can retreat and reassemble. It is suggested that you give priority to the Continental troops around Cheraw, and if possible, Thickety Fort. Once these are eliminated, the remaining militia must wait for CA reinforcements on turn 4 or else fight you at a disadvantage.

On your last turn you should either be entrenched or fortified in Savannah, Augusta, Camden, Charleston, and Ninety-Six. Forget about Hillsboro. You simply do not have the troops to adequately defend six cities, especially since you will probably have only one supply if you succeeded in destroying the Continentals at Cheraw. If the Americans cannot reach a town even on the last turn by force marching, abandon it. You simply have to make sure the American can't reach it. As in the Saratoga campaign, it is in your best interests to break off combat when the Americans attack, bearing in mind that the American commander will realize this also. Just keep in mind the axiom, "He who defends everything, defends nothing."

AMERICAN: This situation is a draw at worst for the Colonists, and possibly a win. As at Saratoga, you should strive to keep from becoming embroiled with the British in the early going. Your biggest aids are going to be rain and your decoys. You should be force marching every turn to stay out of reach and withdraw to Charlotte to pick up reinforcements and occupy Hillsboro if you have not yet done so. As soon as possible (turn 4 at the latest) move toward the five cities with your assembled forces and supply(s). The later you wait to move, the fewer cities you will be in range to attack on turn 5, making your opponents' job on defense easier. You hold the key to victory on turn 5!

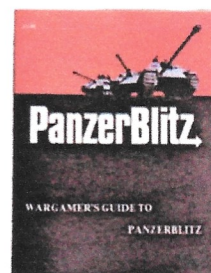
SCENARIO #4: VIRGINIA-YORKTOWN CAMPAIGN—1781

BRITISH: Besides being the longest of the 4 scenarios, (9 turns) this is the only scenario where the British have to contend with a numerically superior Franco-American player (FA for short). At the start there are relatively few forces on either side, which is good for the British as what few colonials exist are located in Baltimore (Exception: 1 RM guards the commerce counter at Petersburg).

For the first 6 turns the British have numerical superiority over the FA. It should be a simple matter for the British to be able to destroy the commerce counters at Charlotte and Petersburg simply because the FA must force march 6 MP to temporarily stop you. The attendant risks in force marching that far, (especially with a 1-6 chance of success) the possibility of losing half your force and also being without supply, make it more likely that the FA will concentrate on delaying your destruction of the other two counters at Richmond and Charlottesville. Even so, your additional reinforcements should enable you to destroy the remaining counters and prepare to face the FA threat on turn 7. One of these preparations should be the construction of a fort at Portsmouth. The main reason is that after the destruction of the commerce counters, the sole British objective is preservation of the army. The FA should be able to get no better than 1-1 odds on your position, adding one to the die roll for the advantage of the extra artillery unit the FA will have. (It takes one artillery unit to construct a fort, among other things. See rules under fortifications.) If you don't think the FA

is going to roll a "no effect" in about 2 dozen die rolls ... on turn 9 you receive your biggest reinforcements. That is when you move your entire combat force (excluding Arty. units) well into the area defined by the scenario for victory and await the FA. When the FA attacks, provided you have your 2-3 ratio, you again play for the proper moment to withdraw and win!

FRANCO-AMERICAN: First on the list of priorities for the FA is delaying the destruction of your commerce counters for as long as possible. Of course, this would require that you stand and fight instead of run as in previous scenarios. Nevertheless, you must take your chances. Would you prefer rolling the die for 2 dozen turns or less? I didn't think so. Should you fail to prevent the destruction of the counters, try to destroy his construction of his fort, as that is what enables him to stand up to you in equal combat at all. Should you succeed, remember that the British will try to break combat if he has his 2-3 ratio in combat points.



PANZERBLITZ BOOKLETS

After hundreds of requests for it, we've finally published the best of the *GENERAL*'s many articles on *PANZERBLITZ*—conventional wargaming's all time best seller. Entitled "Wargamer's Guide to *PANZERBLITZ*", it initiates and may very well end the "Best of the *GENERAL*" series as no other game has been the target of a comparable volume of literary attention.

The 36 pp. manual resembles very much an issue of the *GENERAL* except that it is devoted 100% to *PANZERBLITZ*. The articles are taken almost exclusively from back issues, dating as far back as 1971. In addition, two never before published articles appear, Robert Harmon's "Commanders Notebook" which analyzes the original 12 scenarios, plus Phil Kosnett's "Chopperblitz"—a hypothetical variant utilizing helicopters with six new scenarios.

Reprints include Larry McAneny's "The Pieces of Panzerblitz"—voted the best article ever to appear in the *GENERAL*, "Beyond Situation 13"—twelve additional scenarios by Robert Harmon, "Parablitz", "Panzerblitz", "Blind Panzerblitz", "Situation 13", "Championship Situations", "Panzerblitz Concealment", and "Incremental Panzerblitz". Topping it all off is a complete listing of all errata on the game published to date where the Opponents Wanted Page once ruled supreme.

The Wargamer's Guide to *PANZERBLITZ* sells for \$3.00 plus 50¢ postage and handling charges from the Avalon Hill Game Company, 4517 Harford Rd., Baltimore, MD 21214. Maryland residents add 5% state sales tax.