

RICHTOFEN'S WAR by David Hoover

Published by Avalon Hill, Bookcase format. Avalon Hill has designed a game superior to its predecessor--S&t Flying Circus. Although similar, there are some major differences which I shall attempt to bring out.

1. Climbing. In Flying Circus, when climbing the player must set his current speed at one or more steps lower than maximum. When a plane has a max speed only one above stall speed, it is not able to climb. Also, no movement points are expended in climbing. Not only that but there is a climb progress scale you must work your way up.

Now, let's look at Richtofen's War. Unlike FC, there is a Movement point cost for climbing. This is more realistic. An airplane just does not stand up on one spot and climb straight up. When a plane climbs it is still moving forwards. The reduction in speed is accounted for by the cost, and the engine, which is still running at the same speed, is not affected. Take for example a Fokker Dr 1, and keep in mind that you may never reduce an aircraft's speed to below stall. With a minimum speed of 3, and traveling at 5, it could not climb 300 metres because it would then have only 2 points left which is below minimum. For every 100 meters or less you expend 1 movement pt. This is much more realistic. As far as climb progress scales go, the entire idea is a distortion of reality beyond acceptable limits. In RW, you have 50m steps, while FC has 1000. There is a lot of difference between a plane at 7,000 and one at 7,950. And what about one at 6,950, but who gets to shoot at whom? Diving. Where FC really bungled it. Of course, you have to reduce to max dive speed. The 1st 1000 is free, the second costs 5 points. No distance is gained. The entire dive takes place in 1 hex. RW has a much better system. You can dive 100m per hex, gaining 1 point each time.

Besides the usual differences in physical quality, and the frills like balloons, we feel that Richtofen's war is a far superior DESIGN effort. It is noted that FC's ratings have dropped lately. Well, that, despite what SPI may say, is due more to dissatisfaction with the design than the period.

POOR BLOODY INFANTRY by Richard Pavák

Published by Third Millennium, Die cut counter; unmounted map.

The Miniatures flavor of Battle Flag has long been in evidence. This game shows that flavor, as it is rather obviously a set of Miniatures for Modern Squad level combat reduced to counters and a hex grid. And that, folks, ain't at all bad! You have a choice of weapons ranging from rifles and automatic rifles to sub-machine guns and machine guns. Grenades and flame-throwers are available for close in work. The rules are contained in a small booklet, which is certainly much more handy than a 22x34 rules sheet. The Publisher put the CRT and Terrain Effects charts in the book, which is not as handy as on the map itself, and it is written out rather than in chart form. However, it is fairly easy to make a chart and paste it on heavy cardboard for fast reference.

This game has a drawback in the lack of Armor, but that can be forgiven (and I am told that a Variant is on the way in JP#4).

The mapboard is fairly easy to get along with. With a limitation on colors TM has done well with symbols. A Green and Yellow Marking pen will do wonders for it, though. For a bridge between Miniatures and Board-games it is invaluable. For a wargame it is just plain good. Very realistic.

THE FALL OF ROME by Stephen V Cole

When this game first arrived here, I threw up my hands (and my lunch) in utter disgust. The SPI gang has done it again. The map is small and cheap. The whole game is cheap. Then, when bored s---less in the bathroom one time, I condescended to read the article. Fascinated, I looked at the game. Almost at once I caught a significant detail. This is a solitaire game! It was designed, almost from the first, as a one player game. The bad guys move by automatic rules. A new kind of gaming comes into existence. You aren't really competing. You aren't really trying to win. You aren't really playing a wargame at all! You are watching the History of Rome unfold. I get rather peeved at people who play wargames for historical research only. I like to have fun, I like to win, and on occasion, I like to feel the sand beneath my feet and the roar of the guns. But even I am fascinated by The Fall of Rome. You must take gambles, play the odds, strip the Empire of Legions for campaigns to conquer Armenia (like the early Emperors did) only to be faced with a revolt in Gaul (like the early Emperors were) and learn to be happy with what you got (like the later Emperors). In a day when there are too many games to play anyway, this is a great game to play one time, and then fondly remember.

RIFLE AND SABRE by A V Trevelian

The other guys didn't leave me much space, but, I will try to make the best of it. Published by SPI, boxes, unmounted maps, etc.

This game is part of the Middle Tactical Series that started with Musket and Pike and finished with Grenadier. This extends Grenadier to 1900, and you can fudge your way into 1905 or so without cheating too badly. You get something like 400 counters. For infantry you can choose Muzzle or two kinds of Breakloading rifles. Cavalry come in two flavors, Mounted Infantry and Cavalry. A few machine guns show up toward the end, and you have assorted cannon to round out the show. Combat is quite similar to PanzerBlitz or Soldiers. You have the nasty advantage of forcing a retreat, too. Game Mechanics are rather smooth, but, you have to keep up with when during the turn your units got disrupted. A little fudging though, and you can ignore that part and do okay. A really fascinating game with plenty of Scenarios and plenty of room to expand.

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