



TKO IN THREE

By Alan R. Moon

I wrote this article over two years ago. Surprisingly, it has not aged. I still feel the TKO approach described in this article almost guarantees a Japanese victory in the game, and is superior to the "capture the Hawaiian Island and then Samoa" strategy. And I will continue to play with it till I am proved wrong.

THE JAPANESE ADVANCE IN VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC

VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC won the Charles Roberts Award for Best Strategic Game of '78. It deserved it, though many gamers may think that it is too simple and based exclusively on luck, due to the multitude of die rolls.

I have personal preferences like any other gamer. I do not, however, let these prejudice me against a particular game. I like simple, strategic games mostly, but I play the complicated ones too. And some of them are fun. The reverse should also be true. Those who like the complicated, tactical games should at least try some of the simpler games first, before turning up their noses.

VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC is not just a Pacific Theatre *WAR AT SEA* variant. It is a sophisticated improvement. Though quite abstract, it is a fine representation of the Pacific conflict. It is time to stop calling simple games "beer and pretzel" games. Instead, we should begin to call them little monsters. Or, call the monsters "MONSTERS" in a nasty voice (like we mean it).

With experience, the Japanese gain a slight advantage in the game. This is true partially because they have the offensive, and therefore the brunt of the decisions to make, but also because the Japanese player is usually more daring than Japanese commanders were in history. The how and why of that daring is what this article is all about.

TURN ONE

Turn One is important only as a place-setter for turns two and three. After a little experimenting I now use the following standard setup:

Indonesia—21, 22, 23, and 24 AirFlot

South Pacific—25 AirFlot

Marshalls—26 AirFlot

Aleutians—*Oi*

Marianas—*Fuso, Chikuma, Kumano, Mikuma*

Japanese Islands—*Hyuga, Mogami, Suzuya, Tone*

Central Pacific—*Hosho, Nagato, Mutsu, Yamashiro, Ise, Aoba, Furutaka, Kako, Kinugasa,*

Kitikami, Yokosuka Marines

Pearl Harbor—The Rest

The only Allied ships that can move, the five Allied cruisers, usually avoid a turn one foray. In-

centidentally, only three of them are any real threat, as the Australian ones can't get to the Marianas or Japanese Islands.

The I-Boat should go in the Hawaiian Islands, where it has the best shot at attacking a carrier. This is the I-Boat's mission in the game, unless extreme circumstances warrant otherwise. This one shot a turn at an Allied carrier can make a great deal of difference.

A few other articles have touched on the Japanese carrier placement on turn one. My reason for sending the eight carriers to Pearl Harbor is simply to do the most damage possible. Assured targets are the logical ones.

The *Hosho* goes to the Central Pacific by default. Putting it in Indonesia is unnecessary. The odds are the land-based air will do the job there. And if one British ship does get away, this is less important than the possible destruction of the *Hosho*, since there are no ships to screen it. This is even more evident if the Allied cruisers enter Indonesia.

For the 51% chance that an American carrier will show up in the Central Pacific, it is worth the *Hosho* to get a shot at it. The loss of the *Hosho* in this action is acceptable, in contrast to the seemingly similar action in Indonesia. In the Central Pacific, the stakes are higher. There is an area at stake as well as an American carrier.

Actually, the *Hosho* may get two shots instead of just one if an American carrier shows up. The Yokosuka Marines may draw the first day round fire. The real question is whether or not the Allied player will stay after one round of combat. That is what the nine surface ships are for; to scare him off. The chance of a night combat will be preying on the Allied player's mind, and its occurrence would be disastrous. All but a maniac will run after round one. But, don't feel sad if your opponent opts for a *maniacal* approach. Think night combat. The more rounds he stays, the more chance he takes. If the *Hosho* sinks, so be it. Wave bye-bye. You knew it was a possibility. If the Marines bite it, that's more of a blow, but sufferable. On the other hand, the loss of an American carrier is a costly price to pay for the Central Pacific. If the Marines do manage to land and the American stays, you can retreat if the punishment seems useless. Midway is the important goal, not the area. That is why the Marines will probably take the first shots, especially since the Central Pacific is worth no POC to the Allies. Which is another reason for running after one round. If you do get the U.S. carrier somehow, chase the cruisers.

Of course, if two or more carriers show up in the Central Pacific, consider yourself unlucky and don't bother reading any further, at least till the next game. Finally, the Central Pacific is just not as important as many people make it out to be. Turns

two and three of this article will show why. In the case of multiple carriers showing up, retreat and hope for better times.

Stay at Pearl Harbor for the two extra rounds no matter what! Again, only a maniacal Allied player will elect to fight it out in the Hawaiian Islands, even if all four carrier groups show up there (and that's something I haven't seen happen in over thirty games). However, if the Allies do stay, you can start another game in a half hour or less.

The round one Pearl Harbor target assignments are as follows:

Soryu vs. West Virginia

Hiryu vs. Maryland

Zuiho vs. Tennessee

Ryujo vs. California

Kaga vs. Nevada

Akagi vs. Arizona

Shokaku vs. Oklahoma

Zuikaku vs. Pennsylvania

Round two stacks up like this. Unless things went extremely badly, hit the two 1-1-7 cruisers with the *Ryujo* and *Zuiho*. Leave any and all bottomed ships for the follow-up rounds, when there'll be plenty of factors. Work on the floating damaged and undamaged. Apportion factors on the 7th AF only if you did a lot of damage/bottoming in round one; it's just not that important.

By my calculations, I figure to sink an average of seven ships. I base this on having 52 total shots in the first two rounds, each with 33% chance of a hit (a hit being a five or six). That's an average of 17 + hits. It takes two hits to bottom a battleship on the average (that's six points of damage, or five for the smaller ones), or one hit to bottom a cruiser. Two hits per ship out of 17 + total hits is $8\frac{1}{2} +$. Naturally, there will be overkill on some ships (and I have taken 3 + hits out for this), but my average of seven seems pretty safe, if not pessimistic. Some ships may sink or bottom on round one and leave more than 26 shots on round two. Actually, I really expect to get eight kills or more. Sticking to my seven ship statement though, the seven should be six battleships and one cruiser or five battleships and two cruisers. Remember, no need to kill on round one or two, just bottom. Bottomed ships die during the extra two rounds.

Obviously, these are not mathematician's figures. They're gamer's figures. Most of us are gamers. The detailed articles on odds and formulas look nice on paper and have their worth, but their application during games is impractical. The above is an accurate example of the kind of thinking, in regards to odds, that most gamers do. If they do that much. Actual game playing is done using "the approximately right formula". A lucky gamer always rounds up.

