

# THE MANIACAL APPROACH

## Countering the TKO By Ed O'Connor

*If nothing else, my understudy's deluge of articles in Vol. 17, No. 4 has lived up to the mail considerably in recent months. Take his discourse on Japanese strategy in VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC for an example. Not only did his "TKO in Three" article prompt several rebuttals (two of which are shown here), but it also brought a challenge from one Max Zavanelli of Parkridge, IL to put up or shut up (see letters page). Not one to back off from a challenge, Alan has accepted and will meet Mr. Zavanelli across the cardboard waters of the Pacific at the upcoming CWA Con in a public match. I, for one, gleefully look forward to reporting the outcome.*

I first became acquainted with Alan Moon's "TKO" strategy (Vol. 17, No. 4) when he was a member (and a driving force behind) the Jersey Wargamer's Association. At that time Alan and I had some lengthy discussions about the relative merits of the strategy. My point always was that the game is not nearly as lopsided as Alan believes, and that if the Japanese side has any advantage, it is a small one. Although I never had the opportunity to sit down and play Alan, I did play some other members who had adopted his methods, and I had some success using an Allied strategy which Alan neglected to list with his possible "reasonable" approaches. He does mention it briefly, almost as an afterthought, but terms it only "irritant". I believe, and I shall attempt to demonstrate that, this strategy, far from being absurd or maniacal, is an effective Allied counter to the TKO.

To summarize the TKO, the Japanese player attempts to cause high ship attrition while at the same time building up a large lead in POC by attacking in force into all three of the Allied "home" areas: the Hawaiian Islands, U.S. Mandate, and Coral Sea. If the Allied player responds as planned, there are two major battles on turn two, achieving the Japanese objectives. If the Allied player sidesteps the main Japanese fleet and raids the perimeter, he is left with severe movement problems on turn three and faces the loss of Pearl Harbor and/or Samoa.

In dealing with this attack, the first thing the Allied player must do is straighten out his priorities. Your most important objective for the first four turns should be the destruction of the Japanese fleet while maintaining your own. Your second objective should be maintaining a positional advantage. This means taking and/or holding advanced bases and keeping corridors open so your fleet can move. While especially important for turns 5-8, this objective can be critical on turns 2 and 3. The third objective is, of course, gaining POC. While POC are necessary to win the game, they must take a back seat in the early turns. If the Allied player can achieve his first two objectives of crippling the Japanese fleet and gaining a positional advantage, the maximum Japanese lead of 29 POC can be overcome in the last three turns.

To illustrate how the Allied player can achieve these objectives, I will describe my Allied strategy against the TKO turn by turn.

### TURN ONE

There is not much the Allied player can do this turn, but some important decisions do come up. First, if you have a carrier appear in the Central Pacific and you get a night action, start a new game right away. If you get a day action, go for the marines. A US controlled Midway can severely disrupt Japanese planning. After the first round, run away as fast as you can. There's nothing more to be gained.

Don't stay to fight in the Hawaiian Islands unless you've lost nothing at Pearl and all your carriers appear there. In other words, don't stay.

Send your Australians to help out patrolling the U.S. Mandate and Coral Sea. Otherwise the I-Boat might cost you 2 POC right away. When returning to base, send the Australians to New Hebrides and the DeRuyter to Samoa. Try to get two carriers to Australia. Send any other ships to Samoa. The carriers at Australia are to convince the Japanese player to use three LBA in Indonesia next turn.

### TURN TWO

This is usually the decisive turn of the game, especially against the TKO. The Japanese player will expect you to commit patrollers to at least two of your three home areas. Don't. Send the Australians and the DeRuyter to patrol the Marshalls. Send two cruisers to patrol the North Pacific. Patrol the Bay of Bengal with two British battleships and send the rest of their battleships and the Hermes into Indonesia. The battleships probably won't have any targets, but if they go as raiders they might not make it, and if they're not there the Japanese player might get cute by reducing his LBA commitment and sending in battleships of his own on raid to scare away the British carriers.

If the Japanese player sticks to his plans, he will place three LBA in Indonesia, two LBA in the South Pacific and one LBA in the Marshalls. If he changes this distribution, don't be sad. You've already disrupted his plans. You might be tempted to use your LBA aggressively. Don't. Play it somewhat safe and your reward will be great on turn 3. If you still hold Midway, place them there. If not, and you have three units, put them in the Coral Sea. This area is worth the least of your three home areas to the Japanese, and they probably won't send carriers to oppose them. You might even pick off a cruiser or two in a first round day action. If you do end up facing carriers, don't fret. Four or five carriers against three LBA is not too bad a fight, and the Japanese are giving up something else somewhere. If you only have two units left, consider putting them in the North Pacific and/or Aleutians, where they'll be relatively safe.

At this point, the Japanese player has a tough decision to make. His fleet can only really contest two areas, and there are now four areas in question: Hawaiian Islands (H), U.S. Mandate (U), Coral Sea (C), and the Marshalls (M). If he tries to fight in three areas, his forces will be just too weak in one of them and he would face a major defeat (2-4 carriers and 6-8 surface vessels) at minimal cost to yourself (1-2 carriers and 2-3 surface vessels). The Japanese player then has six possible combinations: 1-H+C, 2-M+C, 3-U+M, 4-U+C, 5-H+U, 6-H+M. Some of these are better than others, some are really dumb, but none is a sure winner. Let's consider them one by one.

1. H+C. This one is a little dumb. The Japanese gain some POC and seal off Pearl Harbor next turn, but by conceding M they can't capture Pearl, and it leaves Samoa open as an Allied base. *Reaction:* Send four carriers to blow away the LBA in M, send four cruisers to each of the Central Pacific and the Aleutians (to save Attu), two cruisers to the North Pacific, and everything else to U. *Result:* Japanese net +11 POC, lose 1-2 LBA (one in Indonesia) and 4-6 surface ships, to your loss of maybe one carrier and 2-3 surface ships. With no chance of losing Pearl or Samoa and the chance of a victory by your LBA in C, you can be very satisfied if you face this situation.

2. M+C. This one is very dumb. The Japanese gain few POC, neither threaten nor seal in either Pearl or Samoa, and they hand you lots of ships to sink. *Reaction:* Send three cruisers and a carrier to each of the Central Pacific and the Aleutians and one carrier to the North Pacific. Divide the rest of the force between H and U. *Result:* Japanese net +11 POC and lose 6-10 surface ships to possibly 4-6 surface ships of your own. You finish the turn in excellent position. Don't count on any Japanese player picking this option.

3. U+M. This is similar to M+C, the only difference being the Allies have a slightly worse position with U blocked. Response is the same, with the U forces in combination #2 going to C this time. Once again, don't count on it happening.

4. U+C. This isn't too bad a move. It threatens to capture Guadalcanal, New Hebrides and Samoa by encirclement on turn 3. The problem is it lets the American fleet run wild while the Japanese carriers have to face LBA. *Reaction:* Similar to that to H+C, but send the U forces to H instead. *Result:* Japanese net +11 POC and lose 1-2 LBA and 4-6 surface ships to your loss of maybe one carrier and 2-3 surface ships, and H is unblocked for turn 3.

5. H+U. This might be the best Japanese choice. It avoids any LBA in C, blockades Pearl next turn and threatens to take Samoa. *Reaction:* Send four carriers to M, one carrier to the North Pacific, four cruisers to each of the Central Pacific and the Aleutians, and everything else to C. *Results:* Japanese net +9 POC, lose 1-2 LBA and 4-6 surface ships to your loss of maybe one carrier and 2-3 surface ships. Unfortunately, the Allied position is not very good, with both H and U blocked, but with a carrier and maybe six cruisers based at Dutch Harbor and everything else at Australia, things aren't too bad. This option should make a fairly even game.

6. H+M. This is also a pretty good choice, transforming the opening into a straight push to capture Pearl. The only problem is the Japanese ships in C and U are wasted, and will probably be sunk. *Reaction:* Send three cruisers to the Aleutians, one carrier and three cruisers to the Central Pacific, one carrier to the North Pacific and divide everything else between U and C. If you have five carriers to start, put two in C because there the Japanese can run away easier. *Result:* Japanese net +9 POC, lose 6-10 surface ships to possible 4-6 surface ships of your own. While Pearl is threatened, you'll have plenty of LBA next turn to defend it, and your position is not too bad. Once again, a fairly even game.

While all this is going on, send all the British carriers into Indonesia. You're really not serious about controlling the area. Your goal is basically to destroy one LBA. The reason for attacking this turn and not waiting for the other carrier is that by waiting you waste at least five shots, the ships you use now may well only be disabled and can return next turn anyway, and it's possible the Japanese might temporarily abandon Indonesia next turn and put their LBA to better use elsewhere. In the battle, concentrate all your shots on one LBA at a time. It's very frustrating to roll two hits on separate LBA and get three damage points on each. You might as well not have bothered. Stay and fight as long as you can. Note that British losses were not considered in evaluating the Japanese options above, because the British losses are the same for each, and they're expendable anyway. You really don't have much to lose here, and if you can kill two LBA, the Japanese player is hurting.

If your own LBA are facing carriers in the Coral Sea, and Samoa or Pearl are threatened with capture next turn, go for a night action and withdraw. You'll do better next turn with all six units together. If you do fight, on the first round put one unit on each of the weakest armored carriers to try to get some kills. If after one round you're still outnumbered, withdraw and save yourself for next turn. With normal luck you'll have lost one LBA and sunk one carrier, which is not a bad trade.

If the Japanese player does decide to fight in three areas, concentrate your forces in only one. The three areas will probably be M, H and U, since your LBA in C will be a match for any three carrier force and will thus be avoided. Your best bet is either to go into M, in order to rescue your three cruisers which are already there, or H, in order to save Pearl, unblock the area and have a decent chance for a night action. Even U isn't bad, because there you'll have an even chance for a night action, and after killing three Japanese carriers this turn your six LBA can probably protect Pearl next turn. In any case, you're not in bad shape.

### TURN THREE

The actions taken this turn are of course heavily dependent on what happened in turn two, but in general the Japanese will have lost about six surface ships and two LBA and will have blocked either U or H with control, while you will typically have lost one carrier and three surface ships. Only one of either Pearl or Samoa should be threatened with capture, since if the Japanese controlled both then you should have controlled the Marshalls, thereby screening Pearl. Whichever one is threatened, defend it with *all* your LBA. Six LBA units can give even ten carriers a heck of a fight, and even if they lose (which they will about 80% of the time) they can make it very expensive, probably sinking 3-4 carriers and forcing the Japanese player to leave a lot of openings elsewhere.

If Pearl is unblocked, look for a chance to use your marines aggressively this turn. That way they get to return and invade again on the crucial fifth turn. Midway can be an inviting target.

If there are any British carriers left, go into Indonesia again as on turn two and try to knock off some more LBA. Every one off the board forces your opponent to give you ships to sink.

Don't spend too much raiding the Japanese interior. Any raids should be used to keep the perimeter open. If convenient, maintain a northern threat with a few cruisers based at Dutch Harbor.

### TURN FOUR

This turn the situation should be a little more stable. You'll probably have a little more freedom of movement than on turn three. Now is the time to raid the Japanese interior and to start thinking about POC, although your chief objective should still be sinking Japanese ships. Be conservative with your marines this turn. Having three next turn can be handy.

### TURN FIVE

Now is the time for the big push. Go for position. If you can hold Guadalcanal and/or Midway and open up the Central and/or South Pacific, you're in fine shape. At the end of your turn try to base battleships at Midway and Guadalcanal, and send any carriers you have left to Australia so that next turn they can hit Indonesia.

### URNS SIX TO EIGHT

These are the turns to make up the 20-25 POC you're probably down. It can be done. If you have been successful so far, you should be able to at least raid every area, and the Japanese player should be able to oppose you in only two, one with LBA, one with his fleet. If he keeps Indonesia and the

## ANOTHER COUNTRY HEARD FROM

### Option 15: The USN Strikes Back

by Grady Hendrix

Alan Moon's "TKO In Three" is an interesting article. It prompted me to test his TKO strategy against what I will call Option 15 and compare its viability with the "Hawaii Strategy". Alan and I agree totally on turn 1, but little from then on. By turn 5, the IJN could accumulate the 29 point maximum yet still lose. Conversely, the IJN could have only 20 points on turn 5 and still win—if the attrition has been favorable. My point is the USN should be most concerned with: 1. maintaining the fleet; 2. denying the IJN bases, (especially Guadalcanal); 3. limiting IJN victory points. This is the flaw in TKO—the USN can ignore victory points early in the game and lay waste to the exposed IJN fleet.

Let's assume the following turn 1 results: 1.) +7 IJN POC; 2.) British in Indonesia sunk; 3.) Midway captured; 4.) six BB's and two CA's destroyed at Pearl Harbor; 5.) both Allied land based air (LBA) destroyed; 6.) no USN CV losses; and 7.) no IJN losses. All of these assumptions except number 6 favor the IJN, but I believe this to be a representative first turn.

### Option 15

The IJN uses the TKO opening for his patrollers and LBA on turn 2. The USN now employs Option 15. Place two CA's in the North Pacific on patrol, both LBA sequestered in Bay of Bengal together with two or three British patrollers, flip all other ships to "raid". This done, the USN has 15 CA's and BB's, and five CV's as raiders. If the IJN evenly divides his remaining ships and sends half to Hawaii and the rest to US Mandates as Alan suggests, he will have ten surface ships in one area and eleven in the other.

Assuming one CV from Japan makes a successful speed roll, the IJN will have five CV's in each area. The IJN can be outnumbered almost 2 to 1 in surface ships in either area; CV hulls are equal. If the USN attacks in either area with his entire fleet and gets a night battle the IJN is cold meat. A day battle, more likely of course, is much better as far as the IJN is concerned. With five CV's present on both sides luck becomes critical. The USN will probably be rolling more dice and will have a slight advantage, however, the IJN is happy to exchange CV's at this early stage. It is impossible to accurately predict an outcome, but for the sake of argument, let's say each side loses four CV's. After such a result the IJN should withdraw, and since the USN BB's are too slow to pursue, the USN should let them go.

Admittedly this situation does not *look* good for the USN. Eighty percent of his CV's sunk, the IJN with bundles of POC. However, the USN now has six LBA and with the attrition the IJN suffered on turn 2 in CVs, taking Hawaii will be difficult. Of course, if the major battle on turn 2 took place in Hawaii, it's already safe from conquest by isolation. But if the battle was in US Mandates, leaving the Hawaiian Islands area IJN controlled, Hawaii is in jeopardy. On turn 3 the IJN will have seven or eight CV's consisting of 21-24 air factors to assault Hawaii. Once again Lady Luck will decide but the LBA have a definite advantage against a less than full strength IJN CV force. The IJN would be very fortunate to win in this situation and would be wise to forget Hawaii.

Therefore I do not believe the IJN can afford to split his fleet into two areas when faced with Option 15. Alan assumes that the USN will send eight to eleven ships on patrol in turn 2 in response to TKO. But by sending out only two, Alan's entire plan is in peril. This gives the USN a crushing surface advantage. Absurd, Alan? If the USN uses Option 15, the only logical thing to do would be to send all surface ships to Hawaii, possibly a few CVL's to the US Mandates, and the rest of Hawaii. However, this leaves the ships in the Coral Sea and US Mandates vulnerable. All of this boils down to risks that need not be taken.

### The Hawaii Strategy

The IJN can hold the perimeter and attack Hawaii on turns 2 and 3, seeking capture of Pearl Harbor by isolation. By massing the IJN in Hawaii on turn 2 the USN can not really afford to contest it. On turn 3 the six LBA will be in Hawaii, but against the entire IJN CV force they should not hold it. The IJN surface superiority will make the USN think twice about moving ships into Hawaii on turn 3. The IJN can abandon Indonesia on turn 3 and place three LBA each in South Pacific and Marshalls to secure the perimeter. Admittedly the TKO will gain more POC in the first three turns, but by using the "Hawaii Strategy" you destroy the US Marines which arrive on turn 3, and cut the USN off from the entire northern part of the board. Your POC gains on turns 4 and 5 will be higher than they would be using TKO. All of this and the only real risk you take is exposing your CV's to the LBA on turn 3. You're going to fight the LBA either way, so why expose your fleet to a possibly disastrous surface battle? By keeping your CV's together, the USN will be hard-pressed to attrition them to the point where his LBA can hold Hawaii.

The best way for the IJN to counter Option 15 is to not allow the USN to use it, period. By attacking Hawaii only, in mass, Option 15 is null, void, and prohibited by law.

## NEW AFRIKA KORPS RULES

A completely rewritten set of rules for AFRIKA KORPS which replaces the old rulebook, battle manual, combat results table, and situation card is now available from our parts dept. for separate mail order purchase for \$4.00. This new rulebook does not alter play of the game in any fundamental way—it merely attempts to clarify the rules of the game and dispose of the few ambiguities that have plagued AK players for years. Maryland residents please add 5% state sales tax.

