

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

Battle for Stalingrad (DVG)	★★★ for PhD ★★★★ for a B&P game
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Period	WW2	Publisher	Dan Verssen Games (DVG)
Conflict/Battle	Stalingrad (1942, GER attack)	Designer	Dan Verssen
Force Size	Army	Date	2014
Mvr Units	Divisions	Grid Size	5 areas (cards)
DOWNness	2DOWN	Map Size	Na, abstract
Players	2	Turn Dur.	Na, abstract
Player Roles	Army commanders	Playing Time	60 min (or less!)
BGG Link	https://boardgamegeek.com/boardgame/72799/battle-for-stalingrad		

Introduction

Subject of the game	The initial German attack on Stalingrad in Sep-Nov 42
Scope	The main city battle, but also includes the fights for Gumrak and Pitomnik airfields, and the influence of the wider Op URANUS
Components	10 location cards ~27 force cards ~ 80 action cards Rubble, rations and medals counters 11pp rules book, incl 3pp playthrough
Presentation - Good	Good looking game, nice stiff cards, well laid out rules
Presentation - Bad	Card text font a bit odd and cramped
Designer's focus/objectives	None given
Overall system description	Very reminiscent of Star Wars CCG by Decipher/Waddingtons – and I expect many other CCGs. 5 locations are laid out, forces can be assigned to a location in Control/Combat or Perimeter positions. Hand of Action cards then used either as actions, or to buy new forces or rations or boost combat power. Next mechanic of drawing the top action card to add to combat as equivalent of dice roll. “Rations” counters are effectively Combat Supplies, and needed to fight and as way of absorbing losses, once all rations gone retreat or eliminated. Every combat and other actions generates rubble, which reduces resupply and can effect combat.
Real Battle Notes	See the books! Germans started rolling up from W (of map, SE in rea life?), bit battle over hill in the centre, and then into the maelstrom of the Tractor Factory etc, all whilst fighting off Sov attacks from the perimeter. Germans ended up with most of city, but Sovs still had a foothold and were being resupplied across the Volga, but the Sovs completed the encirclement and retook the whole city early in 43. – None really relevant other than name check locations as no links between them.

The Game System

Principal areas of reality represented in the game	Not a lot. Not even an attritional grind as won on 1 ½ turns!
Important abstractions	Everything, all done as card actions Rations equates to full CSups range

Types of decisions required	Fairly standard wargames fair – where to put forces, whether to use cards for effect or combat value, where to put enablers, whether to retreat or take losses etc
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	Like most CCGs its all about what combination of effects and values gives the best outcome, and for any turn is there an optimal sequence of employment as I found in turn 2 where Germans were able to take control of 4 of 5 locations (already having one), by combination of battle, using Stukas to clear enemy and then buy reinforcements to just walk in – possibly not very realistic!
How well do game decisions map to real life decisions	Not at all really
Likes/Good Elements (inc ease of play; really good below)	Very good as a beer and pretzels game CSUP mechanic was nice, as was the extra card to replace dice
Contributions to the wargaming state of the art	CSUP mechanic and extra card to replace dice – but may be in other CCGs
Deficiencies	Not too many assessed as a B&P game
Improvements? (beyond fixing above)	Having a mat which actually had the terrain locations and put the control and perimeter areas onto a real map would have really enhanced the Stalingrad experience
Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals	Can't tell as no goals

Overall Evaluation

Evaluation of the player's experience	Very much a B&P game, might give some idea of some of the things that were important in Stalingrad, but no idea of the geography or tactics. Nice and quick though so good as a pick-up game.
Does the game work? (Veracity/Internal Validity)	Yes, game mechanics seem sound, but like many CCGs can probably find an optimum combination each turn
Is the game engaging?	Yes, as a B&P game
Is the game useful – for what?	Not really, other than for having a fun game with mates
How valid is the game? Is the game realistic?	Not at all, not attritive, but is nice to see rubble
Does it provide any special insights	No
Replay value	Probably quite high as so short
Who would be most interested in the game?	Someone looking for a filler game. Even a good intro to bring CCG players into historical wargaming
Is the game good value?	£18 inc p&p second hand – not bad given potential replay value
Overall Impressions	Good solid B&P card based wargame, but little use for PhD

Third Party Reviews	<p>“All in all this is a perfect buy for history fans and wargamers” - https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/3367165/how-good-is-it-for-solo</p> <p>“In a nutshell, the game is brilliant. I am surprised that there is not more excitement surrounding the game by way of reviews and stellar comments. I am surprised that there is, at this time, only one other review of this game.” , “If you want a fast and exciting wargame that is quick and easy to set up and pack away, don’t want to have to learn complicated rules and plays to completion I would recommend this one. “ - https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/1264845/a-barney-in-the-rubble</p> <p>“really good.. like card mechanic and rations .. asymmetric decks” (not played many wargames) https://boardgamegeek.com/video/281973/battle-for-stalingrad/battle-for-stalingrad-board-game-review</p> <p>Solo mechanic using “sideboarding” - https://boardgamegeek.com/thread/2083081/this-game-can-be-played-solo</p>
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Interesting Expansions	None
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MECHANICS (relative to Urban/PhD)

(include Intricacy of the system, and the mechanical ease of play)

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	Na – just use of cards in hand and available CSups
Comms	None
UxV	Na
CEMA	Na
Other ISR	None
Movement	Action cards to move between locations and from perimeter to control
Damage	CSups then card loss
Direct Fire	In assault
Assault	Each side inflicts combat strength + modifiers + random – no “winner” as such
Indirect Fire	By action cards, can be devastating
IEDs/Engineering	None
Casualties	None – Recover Wounded card to add rations when a unit destroyed
Logistics	Rations counters are effectively CSUP and enable attacks and ability to soak hits so critical
Morale	None
Opinion	None
Victory Condition	Control all 5 locations – even if en still has significant troops in perimeter
UTZs	None
Building Damage	Ech location takes rubble (from each fight and
Civilians	None
Subterranean	Sewer card, stops playing or flipping Action cards
Other Urban Specifics/Notable	Propaganda card – stops en drawing extra cards for controlled locations

Triad Representation

	Challenges		Solutions	
	Elms	Comment	Elms	Comment
Civilian Population	0	Nil	0	Nil
Civilian Infrastructure	0	Nil	0	Nil
3D Man-Made Terrain	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rubble counters Sewer card 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infiltration card vs supplies Snipers card Rations as unit of action Isolation battle represented by Uranus

FROM PLAY NOTES

Likes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> way the extra firefight draw gives the randomness
Dislikes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assume you can't use action card for “play when attack” effect, and for Firefight value Do “hits equal to rubble” mean total or in addition?
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very abstracted, even some sort of table mat may have helped Very Star Wars CCG like Good B&P game, possibly for CxUK

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	3 Dec 25	Scenario	Core game, no options
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard

HOW IT PLAYED

- Turn 1
 - Took Tractor Factory but rebuffed at Pitomik
 - Russians took back tractor factory
- Turn 2
 - Blitzed Tractor factory and Pitomik
 - Ge now had control of 3 locs
 - Used two Stuka attacks to push RUS back from two other locs, making uncontrolled
 - Then just recruited two new units to slot into uncontrolled and won!

RESULTS

Won at end of German Turn 2

THOUGHTS (c.f. RL AND URBAN, only for subsequent plays)

Good B&P game, not much use for PhD



Set-up



Turn 1 combat



Detail



End Turn 1



End Turn 2