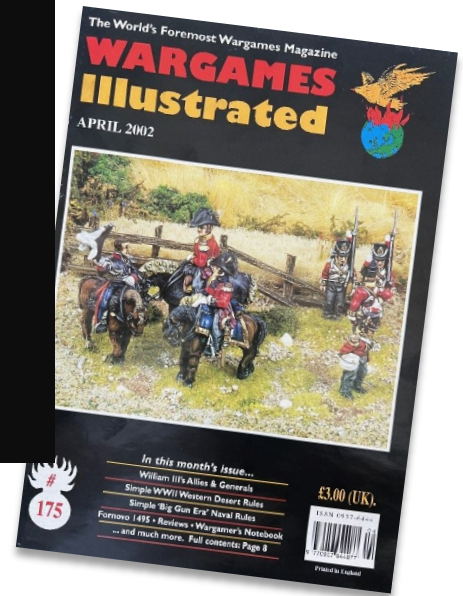


KISS Rommel

or Keep It Simple Stupid

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Originally published in a 2002 issue of Wargames Illustrated, designer Norman Mackenzie made KISS Rommel available for free on the website of his one-time game club, the Phoenix Wargame Club. Our staff has reformatted and preserved the web version in a print-friendly PDF.



by Norman Mackenzie

The Desert war was one of great sweeps over open terrain, dust clouds, roasting heat in day, bitter cold at night. With few civilians and horses to collaterally damage and no SS, it was a clean war (if being torn apart by explosives or dying of thirst is "clean") and the tank crews often considered themselves like knights racing across the sands. It made Rommel one of the best known leaders of the war and was the only time the Germans had practically all their troops on vehicles.

Get a grip on the battle scale being used. It's 1941-42 you are in charge of perhaps the entire Duetches Afrika Korps or 8th Army! Most units equate to battalions giving about a dozen bases per Division. At this level of gaming only large tactically vital positions such as hilltop positions for a battalion become relevant, not looking for a hull-down position for a single tank! The side that is moving will usually get in the first shot, so mobility is often better than standing still. In the desert it is easy to use space to pull back and blast the enemy at ranges where they cannot get at you.

The three forces were Germans (veteran Panzer formations), their Axis chums the Italians (often brave but with poor gear and leadership) against the British Empire. The Germans have better reconnaissance units and advanced tank and anti-tank tactics centred on the terrifying 88mm cannon.

Force Cards

Each side may choose one card and then randomly deal four more. This is their strength for the oncoming battle. For a quicker battle have four rather than five cards. Allow inexperienced players to choose two of their deal. Once you have got used to the system, you can add other forces as you wish, and feel free to have your favourite Divisions rather than those noted. We are not doing an exact recreation of the campaign but will aim at its feel from the post of high-ranking leaders.

Axis (German & Italian) and Imperial (British Empire) Cards

German: 15th Panzer Division	German: 90th Light Division	Trieste: Italian Motorised Division	17th Pavia: Italian Infantry Division	German: 21st Panzer Division	132nd Ariete: Italian Tank Division	55th Savona: Italian Infantry Division	Blank!: Planes from Malta sink supply convoy!
1st British Armoured Division	2nd (New Zealand): British Infantry Division	4th (Indian): British Infantry Division	1st (South African): British Infantry Division	7th British Armoured Division	Two British Armoured Brigades	(Free French): British Infantry Brigade	Blank! Troops diverted to Greece or Malaya!

Organisation

Force		HQ	Recon	Tank	Motorised Infantry	Foot Infantry	Artillery	88mm
German	Panzer	1	2	3	4	-	1	1
	90th Light	1	2	-	6	-	1	1
Italian	Tank	1	-	4	2	-	1	1
	Motorised	1	-	-	7	-	1	1
	Infantry	1	-	-	-	6	1	1
British	Armoured	1	1	3	4	-	2	-
	Infantry	1	1	-	9	-	2	-
	Free French	1	-	-	3	-	1	-
	Armoured Brigade	-	-	3*	-	-	-	-

*These have no HQ but can be attached out to another HQ for the battle.

British Tanks can be any mix of Infantry (heavy) or Cruiser (light fast) tanks.

Italian "88mm" were either their own 90mm AA guns or attached Luftwaffe forces. The numbers of 88mm are exaggerated because their tactical effect was truly brutal! Light AT and support batteries are assumed parcelled out amongst the infantry.

Battle Set-up

Mediterranean Ocean			
Axis Supply	Axis Defences	British Defences	British Supply
Axis Supply	Axis Defences	British Defences	British Supply
Axis Supply	Axis	British	British Supply
Axis	Axis	British	British
Southern Desert			

1. The table is divided into Zones a foot square, with bigger tables tending to improve the battle (preferably by extending it Southwards). The top (North) is considered the Mediterranean and the south is the desert "sand sea".
2. Select forces using the Force Cards
3. Deploy British minefields followed by Axis ones
4. Deploy Italian forces, then British and lastly the Germans

Defences indicate minefields and dug-in positions with minefields being placed right up to the centre line if wished.

Troops must be at least 6" from the centre line. You need not put a Division's troops near their HQ but this could be risky!

A Supply base (use a tent or supply truck model) is placed in the centre of each "Supply" Zone. For a bigger table you might add other Supply bases further South.

There are 9 to 12 turns in a day. Throw before each turn from 10 to 12 with a 5+ indicating the game has ended.

Victory

Each side gains one Victory Point (VP) per enemy unit Destroyed (each Supply base destroyed counts as five

Battle Phases

A turn consists of each side being the Mover and Defender. The Axis player is always the first Mover.

1. HQ's may replace one Scattered unit of the same Division.
2. Mover makes Minefield clearance attempts (in optional rules.)
3. Mover moves units (including replaced units).
4. Defender may fire Dug-in units (in optional rules.)
5. Attacker may fire units.

Units

Nationality	Battalion type	Spotting	Range	Saving throw	Speed
All nations	Head Quarters (HQ)	6"	6"	6	6"
	Reconnaissance	9"	6"	5+	9"
	Foot Infantry	6"	6"	6	3"
	Motorised Infantry	6"	6"	6	6"
	Artillery	6"	18"	6	6"
	Supply Base	-	-	6	-
German	Tanks	6"	6"	4+	6"
	88mm	6"	12"	6	6"
Italian	Tanks	6"	6"	5+	6"
British	Infantry Tank	6"	6"	4+	6"
	Cruiser Tank	6"	6"	5+	9"

Note that Battalion is used in the German or USA definition. In Britain, battalion sized units were often referred to as regiments for historical reasons and artillery is different again! Bases are 30mm square for 6mm figures, but could be varied to suit your models. In 2mm scale several models can be put on the one base. Ensure you can tell the Divisions and unit types apart.

Head-Quarters (HQ)

This may replace any one Scattered unit of its own Division per turn. If it is itself Scattered, you can replace any one of its Divisional units with it at the HQ phase. The replaced unit counts as Scattered.

The HQ is one of the most vital units and can constantly regroup losses. You may send units anywhere around the battlefield but risk them becoming Destroyed rather than Scattered. It is also assumed to be where the light anti-aircraft artillery batteries are clustered. The HQ itself can only be Scattered unless there are no elements of its Division left on table, when it would count Destroyed.

Movement

This is always in straight lines and cannot move nearer to an enemy unit than 2". Units may leave the battlefield off their own base edge only, becoming Scattered (this may be better than staying to be destroyed). You can pre-measure movement as much as you like, but not so much as to slow the game.

Shooting

You may only fire at a unit you that are both within range and within Spotting distance. If one unit of a Division can Spot an enemy unit, the entire Division is assumed to see it. Divisions do not spot for other Divisions. Fire one unit at a time with all units needing a 5+ to hit.

Units fire at the nearest enemy unit except that artillery may fire at any target, and 88mm may choose to fire at the nearest Tank or Reconnaissance target. Units do not block sight.

Saving throw.

Any unit that is hit must make its saving throw or be removed as "Scattered", and can possibly return later in the day (see HQ's). However, it is classed as "Destroyed" and removed from that battle if it was not within 12" of its own Divisional HQ. Tanks and Reconnaissance units automatically fail their save against the 88mm.



ADDING THE FOLLOWING CAN ENHANCE THE BASIC GAME

(Optional) Terrain

You may add some hilltops and ridges to the battlefield to improve the game, and possibly some bad ground classed as "infantry only may enter" or an impassable escarpment. We suggest never more than 8 pieces, and set up terrain before randomly deciding which way is North. Only artillery can fire over hills. Being on a Hilltop increases spotting range by 3" and reduces enemy spotting on to it by 3". It holds one unit. An important ridge could be several "hilltops" long.

(Optional) Stukas / Desert Air Force

Each side is allowed up to three attacks against any spotted enemy units per turn. They dice:

5-6 = target must make saving throw or be Scattered (or Destroyed if not near the HQ).

2-4 = no effect;

1 = if the attack was within 12" of an enemy HQ, the aircraft are dispersed. That air force is allowed one less air attack per turn for the rest of the battle.

(Optional) Minefields

Each side can have up to 30" of minefields (a base depth deep). To cross an enemy minefield dice per unit that tries:

5-6 = Get through OK, stopping on other side;

2-4 = unit stopped in front of minefield;

1 = the unit is Scattered (or Destroyed if not near the HQ)!

To clear a one base wide Gap (allowing up to six units to pass through each turn), get an infantry unit adjacent to the minefield and throw with a 5 or 6 to create a Gap. Note that only one infantry unit per Division may try this per turn (representing the Divisional engineers / pioneers; count the Free French "Brigade" as a Division for this rule).

(Optional) Dug In

Up to 16 units may begin as Dug-in (in substantial trenches, protected by barbed wire, suitable model bases being required). Infantry, artillery, 88mm's, and HQ's improve their saving throw to 4+ and allows them to Spot 3" further, as well as allowing them shooting in the Dug-in phase. Note: troops Dug-in on a Hilltop only increase Spotting by 3" maximum. Tanks and Recon can be "in" the trenches but get no benefit from them. Troops in captured positions do not get the Spotting bonus as the trenches probably face the wrong way! Alternatively you may simply remove captured positions.

(Optional) Italian Problems

Count the Italian HQ distance as 9" rather than 12". Italian Foot Infantry is short of AT weapons, so require a 6 to hit Tanks.

(Optional) The Campaign

The aim is, in a series of battles, to push the enemy back until Africa is cleared. Note that we start at Tobruk. A Victory pushes the enemy back one area; a Major Victory pushes two spaces. Losing their "last stand" area means total defeat! You should rename the British commander after any Major Defeat as they were constantly replaced!

Tunisia - Axis last stand	El Aghelia	Benghazi	Gazala	Tobruk	Mersa Matruh	El Alamein	Alexandria	Cairo Imperial HQ - British last stand
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Divisions that suffered half their bases Destroyed (ignore Scattered), are left out of the Force Card pack for the next game. All formations return to strength for their next use.

Optional Campaign items

For a quicker Campaign, remove El Aghelia and Alexandria from the "map".

In the battle after a Major Victory, only allow half the normal number of minefields and dug in positions. The two sides will not have had time to lay out defences...

If the battle takes place in Tunisia: The Axis may exchange one of the Italian Division Cards for the Schwere Panzer Abteilung 501 (sPzAbt.501) - a Battalion of Tiger Tanks! They were considered super tanks and terrified the Allies! Tigers have saving throw of 3+, spotting 6", range 9", speed 6" and with its 88mm gun may choose to fire at the nearest Tank/Recon unit, which of course gets no Saving throw! Represent it with two units that may be tacked onto other Divisions

Luckily, Rommel did not get the Tigers, their control being kept by rival leaders, but Axis players really love the idea of having them! In Tunisia it is the 8th Army sector only, as the Americans under George "Lust for Glory" Patton, being slapped forward from Morocco, are a different game!