

Friday Night at the Fights

Borisov, Part 1. 1st July 1941

Another play test to do, and this one was for the next Russia 1941 'Forgotten Battles' book... due out in September (or October!)

The protagonists... 18th Panzer Division attacking, 17th Rifle Division, with 'friends' on the defensive. The background to this one is that since the 1st July the 2nd Panzer Group, under General Guderian had been advancing on the Dnepr River and had crossed to the east bank of the Berezina River by the evening of the 1st July at the towns of Svisloch and Bobruisk, 3rd and 4th Panzer Divisions brushing the weak opposition aside with barely a pause. On their left flank 18th Panzer Division was threatening the bridges crossing the river at the large town of Borisov.

18th Panzer Division had forced its way forward at the expense of its support units, 18th Motorcycle Battalion arrived at the outskirts of Borisov by the evening of 30th June, but immediately suffered bloody nose as it collided with hastily constructed defensive positions manned by the much weakened Russian 17th Rifle Division's 1314th Rifle Regiment and the remnants of the 102nd Anti Tank Battalion, reinforced by a few BT7s and T26s manned by trainees of the Borisov tank school. The German motorcyclists fell back. The next day is what concerns the scenario that was play tested.

The scenario started at 0800 hours, with each turn being of 10 minute duration. 24 turns for this game. The Germans consisted of 18th Panzer Division's reconnaissance Battalion, a company of the motorcycle battalion and a company of Panzer IIICs, all coming on table at intervals from period 1. There were two full 105mm artillery batteries available as well. The Russians, all on table and dug in initially, were from 17th Rifle Divisions 1314th Rifle Regiment, (much already 'knocked about' by the brief German attack the previous evening) and two 45mm AT batteries as well as two training tank platoons from the Borisov Tank School.



The player in charge of the Germans decided that they had plenty of time to win this game, so brought the artillery batteries down on map features, a village and a small wood. No less than 5 turns of artillery fire resulted in scattered fire in all directions, and as the Russians were dug in, relatively light casualties. Two T26s certainly felt themselves rattled by near misses, but the overall result for the Germans was unsatisfactory.

By turn 6 the German player decided that the reconnaissance battalion light company needed to be brought on, but rather than take a covered approach to the woods on the German left flank, they



advanced, one platoon per turn, along the road from the southern edge of the table. This gave several Russian tanks the opportunity to spot them, and fire, one Sdkfz222 falling victim to the 45mm AT gunfire. Once in the woods the German light armour tried to get in position to spot for the artillery, but again the eagle eyed Russian tank commanders identified them, at over 1000 metres, and disabled two.

Over the next several turns the German motorcycle company (itself knocked about the previous evening) entered along the road, at speed, but dug in Russian infantry shattered the lead element as shown as it appeared. The woods beside the stream were now loaded with both German and Russian troops, but no-one felt inclined to push forward.

As this was happening, on the other side of the table the company of Panzer IIIs had arrived, but began to fall victim to both anti tank guns as well as dug in tanks. Within two turns no less than seven panzers were knocked out, for the loss of only one dug in Russian tank. (The dice rolling of the German player throughout being the diametric opposite of the Russians!) By now it was the end of turn 15 and clear to all that the Germans were not going to achieve their objective of driving the bulk of the Russians from the table, and the game was concluded.



Unusually for a play-test, on this occasion there was nothing which required adjustment, though it was clear that the German player was looking about for a replacement set of dice!