

GENERAL QUARTERS 3 NEWS

DEVELOPMENT VERSION OF *GENERAL QUARTERS 3* ESCAPES TO PUBLIC BUT **NOT RELEASED.**

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Reports of the sighting of *GENERAL QUARTERS 3* have been traced to an authorized outing made by the authors and a portion of the alpha game testing group. Visitors and patrons of Games University, Orange County's Premier Game Convention, were treated to a demonstration of the forthcoming *GQ 3*, (*General Quarters 3*), hosted by Scale Specialties, on 18. March 2000.

The game was found right in the middle of happenings in the main gaming room at the Radisson Hotel (a.k.a. main ballroom of the hotel). While surrounded by role playing, card, board and fantasy gamers, a small group of stalwart historical players returned to the southwest Pacific in early 1942, the island of Java as a matter of fact, ABDA Command was fighting for its life. Imperial Japanese forces had been relentlessly adding island after island to the new empire and the Allies were determined to stop, at best, or at least hold up the Japanese timetable. Air power was available, mostly Japanese; Allied aircraft would be available if only the die roll were proper (part of the revised rules), scouting and fire control could be supported by the scout planes on the Allied cruisers. Radar? That was a word not in the dictionary, just yet anyway. Guns, torpedoes and the all-encompassing darkness of night were all the Allies could count on. Apart from the night, which can be counted on at least once a day, the ships gathered represented all the Allies had available. Nothing larger than a heavy cruiser, only one of these, and an assortment of American and British light cruisers, all escorted by World War One vintage American 4-pipers. ABDA orders were simple, "Stop the Japanese landing".

Blinded by previous victories, the Japanese forces had anchored in the bay surrounding the landing area. Eighteen transports waited the dawn and readied themselves to disgorge their cargo of Imperial Army infantry. Supreme confidence allowed the transport area to be guarded by three destroyers and their squadron flagship, a light cruiser, Allied intelligence was quite clear about this. The stage was set.

Initially, four volunteers had signed on for the battle, Mr. John Gaffney of San Dimas and Mr. Tom Carpenter and Mr. Tom Santrizos, both of San Diego. The fourth member abandoned his command prior to the conclusion of the game that day (oh yes, it wasn't over in a day, but we'll get to that later) and as a consequence did not earn the Battlefield Commission presented by Scale Specialties (more on that later as well). Mr. John McMannis, an alpha group member, joined the above named players. Together this distinguished association represented the ABDA naval command, cruisers, destroyers and a lot of guts.



The Battle Field and 80% of the players. On the left of the photo is the Japanese side, represented by "Admiral Mitchi", a.k.a. Mitch Mitchell, and thence around the table, left to right – "g.o.d." checking the rule book for a ruling, a.k.a. Mr. Lonnie Gill, on the Allied side, Mr. John Gaffney, a well known bookselling figure at the gaming conventions around southern California, Mr. John McMannis, alpha group member and Mr. Santrizos who with Mr. Tom Carpenter, both from San Diego, Mr. Carpenter not in view, represented the interested public. Also absent from the photo is Mr. Harms, not missing but taking the photo. The spidery material in the lower right hand corner is the supply of black pipe cleaners and the black marks in the landing area is the smoke laid to protect the Japanese destroyers charges. Not easily seen in this view are the Allied destroyers which are about to penetrate the screen and take the transports under direct gunfire. As a note, the green splotches representing the lands edge and that most troublesome island are ceiling tiles painted green with a hex grid laid over the top. In fact these "islands" are usually found in use during our *TacFire* games and represents the forest used to hide many things for many reasons, especially tanks from the prying eyes of aircraft overhead.

The Japanese naval command found the unnamed fourth volunteer joined by Mr. Charles Mitchell and Mr. Norman E. Harms, alpha group and co-author respectively, to fill out the Japanese operational staff, as advisors on the new variations found in GQ 3 and as operational ship divisional commanders. Overall orchestration being provided by Mr. Lonnie L. Gill, author of *GQ 1 & 2*. Fulfilling the duties of *g.o.d.* (general officer directing), Mr. Gill presented each side with their orders of battle and general instructions, allocated areas of operations on the battle area (an area of some size to begin with and made even larger with the utilization of 1/6000^h scale miniatures by Figurehead), determined the time of day, wind direction and speed and all the other little subtleties which make and break battles once set in motion if the players aren't careful. The stage was now set for some knock down, drag out f-u-n.

During a technical break, "g.o.d." is still at it and the written word is about to be released (to be noted by most wargamers, especially those new to the overall experience, DON'T anger "g.o.d." for hurricanes have been known to arise from the depths and heights). In the meantime, Norm Harms discusses the game with an interested passerby. Do you notice a considerable absence of merchant ships on the Japanese side of the board? Damage was heavy but the Japanese equivalent of the U.S. cavalry was about to enter the world from the lower end of the board, bottom of the picture.

Weather and sea conditions were adjudged to be normal, no visual obstructions, fog, haze, etc. The time, shortly before daybreak. Each side wrote up their standing orders, that is what conditions and specific operations were to be done until such time as the enemy forced changes. The Allies pre-conditioned an attack at dawn on the transports. Lacking specific locations of the Japanese forces these orders could only be in a general format. The Japanese command established their patrol lines and hoped the shortage of ships would not find them on the short end of an Allied attack. The invasion bay featured two islands forming both the

entrances to and the outer limits of the bay proper. In such presentation there were three entrances to be covered against enemy intrusion and possible disruption of the invasion force. Scattered within the bay the transports were anchored in five groups of vessels. The Japanese standing patrol found two destroyers in place along the northerly limits of the bay, between the two islands and the anchored transports. In the meantime, the flagship and remaining destroyer patrolled the easterly side and the one most exposed to the open sea. With visibility at the maximum for the time period (night, and as determined by die roll from the newly revised charts for such information) the Japanese were able to determine that two groups of ships, types not immediately known, were present off the bay entrances. Some hesitation entered the picture as

J a p a n e s e heavy units were to be present during the landings. T h i s hesitation was not long in duration as 6" and 8" shells started landing around the eastern patrol group, compliments



of the *U.S.S. Boise* and *U.S.S. Houston*.

Return fire by the Japanese cruiser and destroyer were found to be somewhat wanting at first while *Boise's* gunnery officer probably received a medal as the full broadside found its mark on the cruiser's escorting destroyer on the third salvo. The new firing table allowed a maximum of seven hits (full 100%) when the proper die roll is made, it was and it did. Dead on

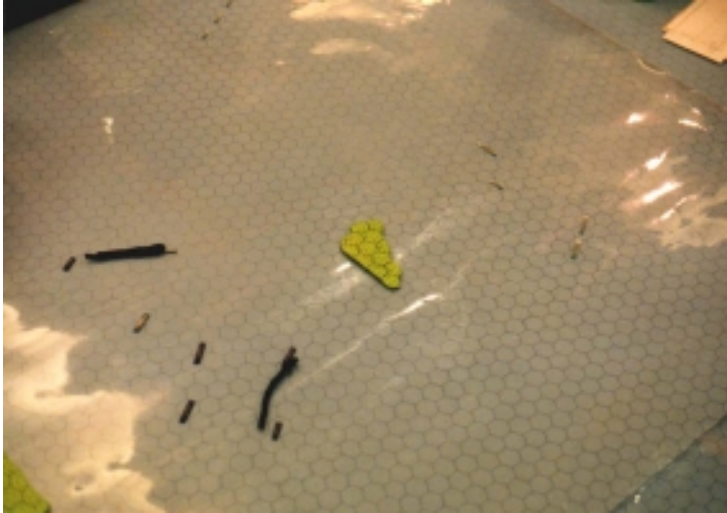
mark, massive destruction twisted the destroyer target. That was the straw that broke the camel's back as it were and the volunteer Japanese commander threw in the towel, well at least for his command unit, the much abused destroyer.



The "playing field" (disregarding the reflection of the overhead lights which appear as white spots of light on the overlaid plastic protection sheeting) was a low-rise table some six feet on a side. In the center of the photo is the protecting island to the invasion beaches in the foreground. Immediately on the right can be seen the Japanese flagship, a light cruiser and a single DD of the patrol forces. The remainder of the forces, with the exception of two remaining DDs, are a portion of the invasion transports. Why do the ships look so small? Well these are Hallmark's Figurehead line of 1/6000 scale military and merchant vessels and the range would be something on the order of looking at the battlefield from a distance of six or seven miles at an altitude of 18,000 feet. It's a matter of perspective.

“That’s just too much to fight!” he said and walked off the playing field.

That was rather an interesting turn of events. For one, the Japanese forces were now commanded by the alpha players. Secondly, that was the first time the maximum number of



The opening phase of the battle. Allied destroyers, the famed 4-pipers of WWI and Lend-Lease, can be seen in the upper left portion of the photo while, the gun power represented by the *Houston* and *Boise* along with their two destroyer escorts can be seen in the center right of the photograph. The *Perth* is following the upper destroyer squadron and made her attack from that side while the U.S. forces closed the range to better use their heavy pieces, which they did. Total success was in part denied by the Japanese use of defensive smoke, two of the smoke-laying destroyers easily seen at the end of the wooly black pipe cleaners used to mark the areas covered by the smoke. Smoke can stay in place for two game turns but is directly affected by the direction and speed of the prevailing wind. Determination of those factors is the responsibility of the referee (g.o.d.). It is believed that the use of smoke helped in preventing the total annihilation of the landing forces. This was a desperate time for the Japanese players and smoke was called for. It must be said, however, that this weapon can be a double edged one and on previous occasions has worked to the detriment of players using it. And to answer another one of those unasked questions in advance, yes we are playing on a hex grid cloth (hard to find these right now) with the plastic to protect the underlay. The rules will cover maneuverability on both free form and hex grid systems.

hits possible had been achieved in such dramatic style. We have mentioned that the original gunnery and damage charts have been reworked with more realism in mind and a greater variety of damage being done. (The author and co-author have heard the comments made about gunnery and the damage tables – the truth of the matter is these items have been changed for our own playing group for some time AND we are aware that adjustments have been made by many of you. The new tables for GQ 3 should answer this problem, increasing realism and all the while keeping down the math and number of charts necessary to resolve the battle outcome.)

Early on, the Japanese command instructed their remaining patrol DDs to lay smoke to protect the hapless transports and the smoke followed and traced their respective courses about the playing board. While a degree of protection was afforded to the merchantmen from the gun fire of the Allied cruisers,

the Allied destroyers closed and launched a deadly torpedo attack – deadly to both sides as not only did several merchantmen feel the sting but the British light cruiser *H.M.A.S. Perth* took at least two, possibly three, fish into the stern area of the vessel. In the meantime an Allied destroyer division charged to get closer to use their lethal cargo on the still sitting Japanese merchantmen.

Through the smoke, guns firing, torps not yet fired, one U.S. four-piper found itself surrounded on three sides by their intended victims. Steam wasn’t sufficient to get under way but steam wasn’t necessary to fire their puny deck guns. Well, maybe an individual ship would present a puny appearance but here sat four and all within their range limit. A torpedo swooshed on its way, it struck. The concentrated gunfire of the merchantmen found their mark as well and the U.S. can turned away to rejoin her retreating sisters.

By now, the sun had risen; the two subgroups of the Allied task force turned away, their mission at an end. Just over the horizon strange smoke appeared and overhead a speck was rapidly approaching. It didn’t take long to identify the closing vessels as two Japanese heavy cruisers and the aircraft was determined to be one of their spotting aircraft. Added by the spotter, the forward batteries of the Japanese cruisers loosed a salvo of what guns could bear and did succeed in hitting the rear U.S. heavy, the *Houston*, and damaged her fire control.

While the Japanese reinforcements were traveling at full speed, the Allied group had not yet rung up top speed for their get away. With splashes all around them, caused by incoming Japanese 8” shells, all ahead full speed was ordered and the chase was on. Luck was with the Allies as the distance was such that only long-range gunfire could hit them, even with the spotter aircraft keeping constant vigil. Command decision time for the Japanese cruiser commander. There was no immediate way of overtaking the Allied ships and the range was insufficient to insure good fire control and only pure luck would find a spot that might, *might* inflict sufficient damage to slow down the trailing U.S. cruiser thus allowing the range to close.

The final play found the Allies hauling over the horizon, maybe more Japanese forces there, no way to tell they still lacked aerial support (die rolls can get to you). The Japanese cruiser force returned to protect the invasion beach and the surviving transports began to unload their human cargo. There are still forces available to both sides and tomorrow, or when we get a chance to get back to it, is another day of mini naval wargaming.

Following the play, we all sat around and discussed the game, how it played, how the rules came into play, what things might be handled better and just overall thoughts. The purpose, after all, is to insure we can present an intelligent, playable game, not bogged down with rules upon rules, sub rules and charts with charts. P-L-A-Y is the word we want to concentrate on. Due to the amount of smoke that had been in use (and I suspect this was due to the fact that the Japanese players were by this time composed of the alpha group who



Surviving “Japanese Commanders”, Charles “Mitch” Mitchell, alpha player, and *GQ 3* co-author, Norman E. Harms, on right, discuss continuing tactics as the Allied command moves their vessels during one of their initial turns. The Scale Specialties sign announces the game play date and time to the visitors and participants of the Games University convention. It had been hoped that a second game featuring the new land rules by Mr. Gill, *TacFire*, would be played that afternoon but GQ ruled the day ending around 1600 hrs that day.

have some small experience using these little tricks but readily picked up by the new players) the length of duration of the smoke was called into question and the height at which it would reside. This is important for the gunnery control and acquiring targets. Points to ponder and be addressed.

Dialogs of such a nature are important to us. It allows an exchange of ideas and presents an opportunity to question aspects of play. As has been said a number of times concerning *General Quarters 1 & 2*, it was the play testing which made the difference. Questions asked, approaches to play constantly reviewed, change play sequence, check results, maintain realism and play test some more. Such an approach has stood the test of time, especially in as much as we shortly will be celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the release of the original *GQ 1*, and joined a little later by *Volume 2*, have been continuously in use by naval wargamers the full span of time. That must speak well of the product and newer players are finding the rules set daily. You can expect more tests and the authors hope that through this web site a dialog can be established by which questions may be expressed and answers found. To be sure, this will help improve the overall performance of the rules.

But remember this is a two way street for information. As Mr. Gill and I have dug into more complex matters, i.e. typical ranges of operation for searchlights, not optimum range but where they WERE used, the answers have been found in some obscure places and we have been fortunate enough to have met individuals who have personal knowledge based on experience directly or the written sources themselves. It would be nice to have the answers to all the possible questions that arise, frankly we don't, but have been able to get them or resolve difficult points to not create such a situation. This URL is our face to the world and you may, from time to time, see requests for assistance dealing with one of these

troublesome points which are dug up as we progress through the total operations of the new rules. To be sure much more information has been released and is available than that which existed when the original *GQ*'s were released. But also be assured that no one individual has ALL this information. Watch this site for updates and requests.

And by the way, this battle was continued the next weekend but the outcome remained the same, just couldn't close the distance. That one battle but not the war. Operations will be looking towards Pacific type games. We have found this is the area where most of the rules are tested to their max. Our group's ongoing campaign in the Med is fun to play but the equipment in the Pacific is far superior. We know that the aircraft rules will be severely tested along with the variations on the torpedoes, etc., etc. Radar, intelligence gathering, we know now what these were and how they were used but can these be incorporated into the game to represent the historical aspect as well? Lots of questions asked, lots of questions answered but not all.



Part of the play testing found discount certificates provided by Scale Specialties to the play testers. Here Norm Harms, head of SMS, is shown passing out the Battlefield Commissions, that came as the top part of the certificate, indicating the player had participated in the play testing. Mr. Carpenter is shown receiving his sheet while Norm obscures, Tom Santrizos, center, and John Gaffney, left. These players exhibited a high degree of knowledge concerning the real history behind these plays and a good dialog was held with an exchange of ideas and thought concerning the play, the game and its rules. Thanks guys.



Here's the group from the *official first* time out in public play testing GQ 3. From left to right, our testers, Mr. John Gafney, Mr. Tom Santrizos, Mr. Tom Carpenter, Mr. Lonnie Gill (author of *GQ 1 & 2* and the forthcoming *TacFire* as well as why we were there *GQ 3* and we might add the semi-official history of the American Tank Destroyers of WW II and prior to all that, author of a number of articles which appeared in the AFV G-2 News armor magazine dating from the late '60's and early '70's), from the alpha testing group, Mr. Charles, "Mitch", Mitchell, Mr. Norman, "Norm", E. Harms, head of SMS, to be co-author of *GQ 3* and author of numerous military history/photo books including books from the Aero Armor Series, Feist Publications, Squadron/Signal Publications and Doubleday and Company as well as SMS's own publications, and the production manager of the original *GENERAL QUARTERS 1 & 2*, and the last member of the alpha group present on this day, Mr. John McManis. Our appreciation and heart felt thanks for the efforts on the part of all those present. A special thanks to SMS's other co-owner, Pen Harms, Norm's wife, for taking this picture and watching Scale Specialties' dealers table, seen in the background, allowing him to play with the group. I suspect thanks are due to most wargamers wives as well.



What's this? Well, the answer to where did the Japanese fleet come from. The paint bottles are the proper gray colors for the IJN ships, at least five colors of "official" gray depending where the ship was last overhauled (special note, these paints are now available from Model Expo Inc. and includes U.S. grays AND greens and browns, R.N. colors through 1941 and color charts for more with the promise of paints for German and Italian fleets coming – a scale, historic modelers dream come true). Laying in the tray, surrounded by the paint bottles, is Scale Specialties Ships Name List for the Japanese Navy WW II (these sheets provide the names and variations if any for the major fleets of the First and Second World Wars, just cut out and place on the model, check the web site for a complete listing). Sitting on the name sheet is a plastic box, same size as C in C's tank transporter boxes, which is the home of Norm's Japanese fleet. One of the great advantages of the Figurehead 1/6000 scale models is that a huge fleet can be easily carried AND more importantly, stored in a relatively small area. Another interesting feature and I believe this is totally correct, Figurehead is the only manufacturer to offer sinking vessels in several different poses, merchant ships to be sure but a bow sticking out of the water could be almost anything. We did use these, more on the Japanese side than the Allied, but then they took their share and it wasn't Scott free for the ABDA Command.