

NEW VARIANTS, UNITS 8r, RULES

8th Air Force Variant: Abbeville Kids

BY JOSEPH LEGAN

The *Down in Flames Series* is exciting and fast paced. My previous article described how to inject a role playing flair to this system by generating squadrons of pilots (see C3i Nr.6). This article further refines this idea and takes it to 1945.

It was rumored in the RAF about a group of elite German fighter pilots based out of the French town of Abbeville. These Germans were referred to as *The boys from Abbeville*. When the 8th AF arrived from Savanna, GA, these terrors of the sky quickly became americanized to the *Abbeville Kids*.

First, some clarifications about my original article. (And to think I used to complain about developers needing errata!) When rolling for replacement pilots a "-3" is applied to the dice. This will obviously generate more *rookie* pilots.

The best place for a rookie pilot is as a wingman for an experienced pilot. Here is how the *rookie table* results apply to wingmen: Decreasing a burst rating means the offensive rating drops one. (Never goes below zero.) Decreasing the damage rating by one remains the same. Decreasing the horsepower or performance rating means the defensive rating drops by one. (Never drops below one!)

The American Army Air Corps began the war with well trained pilots but no combat experience. (Save for the American Volunteer Group in the Far East and the American Eagles in England.) Pilots had upwards of 500 flying hours and were proficient in navigation. Early in the war they were plagued by inferior equipment and, over Europe, by inferior tactics. America repeated the *Luftwaffe's* mistake of requiring fighters to remain close to the bombers at all times, thus limiting their ability to engage. By late 1943 this was

changing unofficially and in 1944 official policy changed to allow more flexibility.

The United States rotated pilots. Consequently most *aces* were either moved to administrative jobs or sent home as instructors. In game terms this translates to few rookie pilots (better training) but also few aces. The quality of American fighter pilots slowly improved through the war as more and more instructors had combat experience. Table 1 is used for squadron generation for the United States.

The German *Luftwaffe* began the war with well trained pilots and tactics to exploit their aircraft. Tactics such as flying in pairs with a wingman were developed during the Spanish Civil War by the Condor Legion (made up of patriotic German *volunteers*).



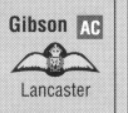
These lessons learned were disseminated throughout the *Luftwaffe* before the war and quickly copied by the Allies after the outbreak of hostilities. The German mistakes about escorting bombers during the Battle of Britain have been mentioned above but once on the defensive, they developed a highly sophisticated interceptor network.

Germany did not have the luxury of rotating pilots. They did have the advantage of fighting over *friendly* territory most of the war so many pilots who bailed out could return to their units quickly. As fortune turned against the *Luftwaffe*, their training became shorter until many pilots could not navigate correctly upon joining their squadrons. This was due primarily to fuel shortages and Germany's ever increasing desperation to defend her cities. Finally, in the closing months of the war, morale in the *Luftwaffe* sank and many veterans simply avoided combat rather than perish in a conflict they knew to be lost. In game terms the Germans enjoy the luxury of high scoring aces throughout the war but her influx of poorly trained pilots grows larger every year. Table 2 is used for squadron generation for the *Luftwaffe*. Please note that when forming a jet squadron +1 is added to all pilots and +3 is added to the squadron commander. In addition, replacement pilots sustain only a -1 instead of the normal -3. This is because jet squadrons were *high profile* and were formed by taking good combat pilots from existing squadrons.

The Royal Air Force was a small and highly professional force at the outbreak of the war. They lacked combat experience but quickly learned from their adversaries. The RAF originally used a *vic* formation of three planes flying in an inverted "V" instead of pairs of aircraft in combat. This was highly inefficient and shortly after the Battle of Britain began they switched to pairs of aircraft. (For players wishing to try the *vic* have one leader and two wingman as an element.) During the Battle of Britain replacement pilots did have their training shortened slightly but they lost fewer experienced pilots because they were fighting over friendly soil so the

8th Air Force

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Contents: 132 Playing Cards; 128 die-cut Counters; Six Campaign Displays and Four Air Operations including - *British Dambusters Raid* and *The Schweinfurt Raids of 1943*; One Rulesbook; One Campaign Book; Eight Target Displays; One 10-sided die; Bookcase Box

8th Air Force Variant

experience level of the squadrons remained high. After the Battle, training time was returned to normal but as the combat was carried over hostile ground fewer aces that were shot down returned to fly again.

In game terms the British fall somewhere between the Germans and the Americans. They have a fair amount of aces but they have some rookies also because most combat veterans did not end up as instructors. Table 3 is used for squadron generation for the RAF.

Extra Tidbit

Pilots of all nations seek glory. No matter what front he is on, that front is the hardest. Nowhere was this line of thinking more wide spread than in the *Luftwaffe* (with some justification). Pilots on the Eastern Front raked up many more kills than their brethren in the west and south. Since decorations and fame were directly tied to success in battle, jealousy was a natural consequence. In order to even the playing field, (after all, it is harder to shoot down a B-17 than a Mig-3) the points system was instituted (see *Points System, right*).

This system recognized the fact that shooting down a bomber in tight formation was harder than shooting down a fighter. In addition, knocking a B-17 out of formation (ie. Separated) was viewed as a difficult feat. Final destruction means the points awarded after it has been forced out of formation.

Decorations were awarded after the following point totals had been reached:

A W A R D	Points Needed
Iron Cross 2nd Class	1
Iron Cross 1st Class	3
Honor Cup	10
German Cross	20
Knight's Cross	40

Players may feel free to keep track of their awards. A logical extension of this system would be to keep track of

points instead of kills for ace status. We actually don't use this but players would roll on the attribute table (see Table 1 from the previous article) after five points on the Western or seven points on the Eastern Front.

Now players can take their squadrons to the skies in search of the *Abbeville Kids*.



P O I N T S Y S T E M			
Aircraft Type	Destroyed	Separated	Final Destruction
Single-Engine Fighter	1	NA	NA
Twin-Engine Bomber	2	1	1/2
Four-Engine Bomber	3	2	1

Table 1: United States Army Air Force			
Dice Roll	1942	1943	1944-45
2	R	R	R
3	R	R	-
4	R	-	-
5-8	-	-	-
9	-	-	A
10	-	A	A
11	A	A	A+1
12	A	A+1	A+2

Table 2: German Luftwaffe			
Dice Roll	1939-40	1941-43	1944-45
2-3	R	R	R
4	-	-	R
5	-	-	R
6-8	-	-	-
9	A	A	A
10	A	A	A+1
11	A	A+1	A+2
12	A+1	A+2	A+3

Table 3: Royal Air Force			
Dice Roll	1940	1941-43	1944-45
2	R	R	R
3	R	R	R
4	R	-	-
5-8	-	-	-
9	-	A	A
10	A	A	A
11	A	A+1	A+1
12	A+1	A+1	A+2