

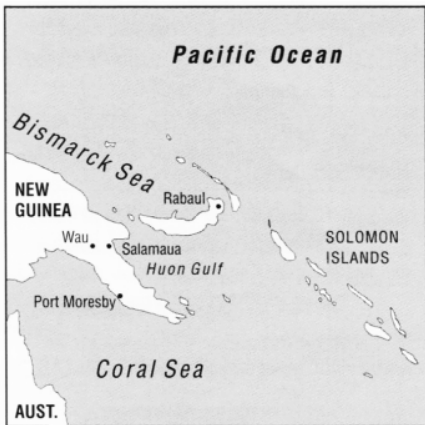
Zero! and Corsairs & Hellcats — DiF Series Campaign

Battle of the Bismarck Sea

BY DAMES CRATE & CHRIS JANIEC

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By early 1943, MacArthur's American and Australian forces were pushing back the Japanese in New Guinea. The Allied forces had crossed over the Owen Stanley Mountains to Wau, threatening Salamaua and other Japanese bases on the Huon Gulf. Japanese commanders at Rabaul decided to send a reinforcement convoy of 6900 soldiers to force the Allies back across the mountains.



The convoy, consisting of eight destroyers and eight transports, sailed the last day of February. The Japanese steamed under the protection of a storm front until 2 March, but by midmorning of that day the convoy had been positively located north of Cape Gloucester. B-17s made runs on the convoy from 6,500 feet, hitting and splitting *Kyokusei Maru* in two without loss to the bombers. The next day, 5th Air Force commander George Kenney threw everything he had at what remained of the convoy. Allied losses included the Pacific's first P-38 ace, Hoyt Eason, but four destroyers and all of the transports were sunk in well-coordinated attacks, including the first large-scale use of skip bombing. Afterwards, no more large convoys to New Guinea were attempted by the Japanese; reinforcements were dispatched only by barge or submarine at night.



Special Rules

Targets

The Japanese convoy consists of eight Freighter and eight Destroyer targets as shown on the campaign log sheet. The printed values on the Freighter and Destroyer target cards are modified as per the log sheet and the following rules.

Area Flak

Area Flak for an attack on any ship is "1" until the Allied player inflicts damage worth a total of six or more VP against any three or more Destroyer targets. Thereafter, Area Flak is as indicated on the target cards. Japanese fighters Over Target always face one Area Flak.

Target Flak

If a Hit result occurs when strafing, that ship's Target Flak is immediately, but temporarily, reduced by one against that attack (only). Upon becoming Damaged, each ship's Target Flak is permanently reduced by one. These two effects are not cumulative; Target Flak is never reduced by more than one. Note that ships reduced to zero still draw one Target Flak card against Very Low Level bombers.

Missions

The battle lasts two days and includes two missions each day. Strike aircraft are specified for the first mission of each day

(see below), with certain Undamaged aircraft then conducting the second strike (any hits incurred during previous strikes are removed). Aircraft flipped to their Damaged side or Destroyed in the day's first mission are never available for the second mission. Note: only one of the two pairs of B-25Ds is trained for Very Low altitude attacks on 3 March; if Damaged or Destroyed during Mission # 3, aircraft from the other (Low altitude) pair cannot be substituted in Mission #4. Japanese aircraft are specified for each mission.

Resources

Are specified on the campaign log, and are not selected by the players — they are mission conditions.

Both players choose the starting altitudes of their fighters as if it were a Dogfight mission (4.5). Escort fighters may not carry bombs or strafe convoy targets.

All missions consist of two Target-Bound and one Home-Bound Turn. As in carrier campaigns, this duration is not changed by the Formation Speed of Strike aircraft.

Japanese fighters that go Over Target may attack any element or formation at the same altitude during the Over Target Phase, no matter which ship(s) they are attacking.

The Allied player chooses a target for each bomber at the beginning of the Ingress Turn by recording it on the campaign log sheet. Each aircraft may (but need not) have a different ship target, even though they still fly as L/W elements or bomber formations. After making this decision, aircraft may not be switched to another target no matter how much damage the announced target has taken.

Exception

Beaufighters may each make one additional Strafing attack (after the first) against a different target. Just as in normal missions, elements and formations cannot be split up except when Damaged bombers fall out of formation.

2 March Strike Package:

Escort: L/W P-38G
Bombers: 2 B-17E + 2 B-1B-17F*ow)
Mission 2 Strike consists of Undamaged Bombers from Mission 1 (at Low altitude)

DiF Series: *Struggle for the Aleutians*

3 March Strike Package:

Escort: L/W P-38G + L P-38G + Lynch

Flak Suppression:

L/W Beaufighter IC (choose altitude)

Bombers: 2 A-20A mod + 2 B-25-C1

+ 2 B-25D (Very Low)

2 B-25D + 1 B-17E + 2 B-17F* (Low)

Mission 4 Strike consists of Undamaged Escorts and Bombers from Mission 3 - do not include Beaufighters

* Use B-17E cards from Zero! with their printed ratings as B-17Fs

RESOURCES

All of the resources used in the campaign come from Zero! and Corsairs & Hellcats. They are listed here solely for the convenience of the players.

Bad Weather

All Mission Aircraft are considered to be out of formation. No Turret Support may be used.

Clouds Over Target

Draw one Action Card at the start of the Ingress turn. If a Blue-bordered card is drawn, Vitals become Directs, Directs become Hits and Hits become Misses, and Target Flak is reduced by one. This does not affect Torpedo attacks or Target Flak against Torpedo attacks.

Late Arrival

The appearance of one element of enemy fighters (your choice) is delayed. Draw one card to determine the length of the delay. The element is placed at the beginning of the following turn, starts at any altitude (owning player's choice) and goes last in Turn Order.

Action Card Drawn	Number of Turns Delayed
Red - bordered	3
Blue - bordered	2
White - bordered	1

Missed Escort

Draw one Action Card at the start of the Mission. If a Red-bordered card is drawn the opposing player must remove one L/W of his Fighters from the Mission. Neither player receives VP for the removed aircraft.

Skilled/Green Pilots

Use Solomon Islands Early '43 Pilot/Crew Selection Table for Skilled or Green Pilot selection. Ki-43 pilot Sawata has the Damage and Horsepower skills.

Campaign Victory

Victory is determined slightly differently from other *Down In Flames* campaigns. The Allied player receives points for damaging and sinking ships in the convoy as shown on the campaign log, but not for Damaging or Destroying Japanese fighters. The Japanese player receives points only for Destroying (not Damaging) bombers:

Heavy Bomber	3
Medium Bomber	2
Light Bomber	1

Air Group Performance Allied VP – Japanese VP		
Allied	Net VP	Japanese
Outstanding	55 or more	Appalling
Excellent	51 to 55	Dismal
Good	48 to 50	Bad
Historical	44 to 47	Historical
Bad	38 to 43	Good
Dismal	32 to 37	Excellent
Appalling	31 or less	Outstanding

Solitaire Variant

All Resources still apply. Play bombers normally as the Allied player. Ignore Escort fighters except as described below. Use the following rules for the actions of the Japanese CAP:

- Japanese fighters start at Medium altitude.
- At the beginning of each mission turn when fighters of both sides are present, randomly remove one fighter from each side. No VPs are scored for these fighters, and these removals have no impact on availability of USAAF fighters in Mission #4.
- If there are no bombers at the same altitude, a Japanese fighter element may dive one level before attacking.

• Each Japanese fighter remaining (except Wingmen that changed altitude this turn) attacks one Allied bomber at the same altitude by drawing a Wingman mini-hand (even if it is a Leader).

- 1) Draw the Japanese mini-hand face up.
- 2) If a Maneuvering or Half Loop is drawn, the fighter attacks a bomber according to the following priorities:

- Most Damage already incurred
- Highest remaining Bomb Rating
- Fewest number of aircraft in formation or element
- Randomly

- 3) Otherwise, player chooses the target bomber.

- 4) Draw bomber's hand or mini-hand as necessary.

- 5) Player responds to IMS and OotS cards in the Japanese mini-hand in any order desired. If responding with an IMS or OotS, any appropriate Japanese response card must be played.

• Remove Damaged Japanese fighters from the mission at the end of each turn.

• Japanese fighters will go Over Target.

Example of Play

The Mission #1 Resources have been resolved, with Late Arrival delaying the appearance of the A6M3 element until Turn 2 and with Missed Escort having no effect. In Turn 1, one P-38G (it doesn't matter whether it is the Leader or Wingman in the solitaire variant) and the A6M2 Leader are removed. Since no other Japanese fighters are in play, the turn ends without further action. In Turn 2, the remaining P-38G and the (randomly-chosen) A6M3 Wingman are removed. Because there are no bombers at Medium altitude, the A6M3 Leader dives to Low altitude and draws a face-up mini-hand of 4 cards to attack one of the B-17s: Maneuvering, IMS 1/2, OotS 2/3, and Tight Turn. The Maneuvering card forces the Zeke to attack one of the B-17Fs (because it has a higher Bomb Rating). Since the Bad Weather Resource negates Turret Support, the bomber draws only a 2-card mini-hand: IMS 1/1 and Half Loop (Spoiled Attack). The player chooses to use the Spoiled Attack to negate the OotS card and responds to the Japanese IMS 1/2 with his own IMS. The B-17F receives two hits, the Zeke one, and play proceeds to the Ingress Turn.

Corsairs & Hellcats **DiF Volume IV**

Air Combat in the Pacific Theatre, 1942-1945
Published: 2003
Game Design: Dan Verssen
Game Developer: Mike Lemick
Art Director: Rodger B. MacGowan



MX7 Ohka
(carried)



Misses



L1 Fox
B-25

Contents: 88 Color Counters; 124 Color Cards; Rule Book; 6 Target displays; 7 Campaign Maps; Bookcase Box
Time to play: 15 minutes (dogfights) and 1 hour (campaigns)
Unit Scale: Individual aircraft
Players: 2+