

A Corsairs & Hellcats Variant Guadalcanal Carrier Battles

by Chris Janiec

The Eastern Solomons and Santa Cruz Campaigns in **Corsairs & Hellcats** allow players to refight those battles using the actual resources available to the commanders. But during the Guadalcanal campaign, one or both sides were usually uncertain as to how many carriers opposed them. This variant provides players with some of that initial uncertainty (and enhanced replay variability) while retaining the same structure as standard **DiF** carrier campaigns. In each battle, the odds are you will be facing historical opposition — but until the first strikes are launched, you won't know whether that's what you're really up against, or if the enemy has more or less than was actually present in 1942.

Operation Sequence of Play

- On Turn 1 only, each Player secretly draws one Action Card and consults the Carrier Force Matrix to determine Carrier Task Forces (CTFs) available
- Each Player secretly records Tactics and Flight Ops for each Carrier Task Force for the Turn
- Players reveal (and discard, on Turn 1 only) Force cards and their Choices selected
- Each Player secretly selects Targets and one Resource per CTF (IJN at most 1 more than USN)
- Players reveal Targets and Resources selected, and assign Resources to inbound Strikes
- Conduct Strikes. **Strikes on opposing Carrier Task Forces are simultaneous unless Resources determine otherwise.** Strikes against the IJN Invasion Force occur last
- Record Damage. Attempt to Recover Carrier **Fleet aircraft**
- Determine Victory after 3 turns. The Player with the most VPs wins

Special Rules

1. To play the Battle of the Eastern Solomons, use the 1" Battle portion of the Carrier Force Matrix. The Japanese Invasion Force target is in play.
2. To play the Battle of Santa Cruz, use the 2" Battle portion of the Carrier Force Matrix.
3. To use this variant as part of the Guadalcanal Campaign, use the Minor Battle columns of the Matrix for the first Carrier Campaign declared less than 5 weeks after the previous one. In every Carrier Campaign after the first, each Japanese Strike mission may have a maximum of one Skilled pilot.
4. Pilot Selection: Use the Eastern Solomons matrix for the 1" Battle, and the Santa Cruz matrix for the 2" and Minor Battles.
5. Reduced CTFs: Some results on the Carrier Force matrix are asterisked. Treat an asterisked CTF as if the shaded boxes on its Damage Track are already checked off, and use the asterisked line of the Air Group Table and the VP in (parentheses). Note that TF16 does not have parenthesized VP listings when Reduced.
6. Withdraw Tactics: *Withdraw* is an additional Tactics choice available for a CTF at Medium or Long Range. A Withdrawing CTF may not launch a Large Strike. Recovery of Damaged Aircraft draw (25.7) is 3 cards. Once a CTF chooses Withdraw for its Tactics, ignore that CTF in succeeding game turns. It may neither launch a Strike nor be a target *after* the Turn Withdraw was chosen.
7. If the US player chooses Long Range or the Japanese player chooses Withdraw, US Fighters may **not** escort US Strikes from or against those CTFs.

Carrier Force Matrix						
Carrier Forces Available						
Index # of Card Drawn	1st Battle		2nd Battle		Minor Battle	
	USN	IJN	USN	IJN	USN	IJN
1-4	TF61 & TF18	SF, AF* & DF	TF61 & TF18	SF, AF & DF	TF16* & TF18	AF
5-6	TF61 & TF18	SF, AF* & DF	TF61	SF, AF & DF	TF16	AF
7-8	TF61 & TF18	SF & AF	TF61	SF, AF & DF	TF16	AF
9-14	TF61 & TF18	SF & AF*	TF61	SF, AF & DF	TF16	AF
15-16	TF61	SF & AF*	TF61	SF, AF & DF	TF16	AF
17-20	TF61	SF & AF*	TF61	SF & AF	TF16	SF*
21-32 ^{1,2}	TF61	SF & AF*	TF61	SF, AF* & DF	TF16*	AF*
33-60 ^{1,2,3}	TF61	SF & DF	TF61	SF, AF* & DF	TF16*	AF*
61-64 ^{2,3}	TF61	SF & DF	TF61	SF & AF*	TF16*	AF*
65-72 ^{2,3}	TF61	SF & DF	TF16	SF & AF*	TF16*	AF*
73-78 ²	TF61	SF	TF16	SF & DF	TF16*	AF*
79-80 ²	TF16	SF	TF16	SF	TF16*	AF*

Key: TF: Task Force SF: Striking Force ¹ 2nd Battle historical Battle of Santa Cruz, 26 October 1942
 DF: Diversionary Force AF: Advance Force ² Minor Battle historical Naval Battle of Guadalcanal, 14 November 1942
 *: Reduced – see Special Rule 5 ³ 1st Battle historical Battle of the Eastern Solomons, 24 August 1942

Corsairs & Hellcat Variant — Eastern Solomons/Santa Cruz

- Each Resource may only be used **once** by each Player, whether playing a single Battle **or** as part of the Guadalcanal Campaign, **except "Search Mission" may be used once per Battle.**
- Game Turn 3 is a Dusk Turn. Draw two additional cards for all (not just Damaged) Strike aircraft when Recovering Aircraft during these turns.

Strike Order and Consequences

As indicated in the Sequence of Play, most Strikes will be simultaneous instead of sequential as in Rule 25.53. A player may also have more than one Strike (from different CTFs) against the same Target in a turn. **All simultaneous Strikes must be resolved before their results have any consequences.** This applies to both damage inflicted on CTFs and aircraft destroyed. Note that the **Armed Search** Resource mission occurs *before* any other Strikes, so any damage inflicted on the target CTF may affect that CTF's Strike and CAP (although loss of the SBD or defending Zero will not).

EXAMPLE: The Striking Force (SF) and Advance Force (AF) both launch Strikes against TF16, which targets the SF. The players choose to resolve the SF's Large Strike first (although the order makes no difference). Even if this first Strike succeeds in putting TF16 Out of Action, the AF Strike must still be resolved against the same TF16 CAP, and TF16's Strike may still exact vengeance.

Resources (both sides)

- Search Mission — Conduct a Patrol Mission before conducting any Carrier Force Strikes this turn. Draw a card to determine the aircraft involved:

	USN Search		IJN Search	
	Search Aircraft	Interceptor(s)	Search Aircraft	Interceptor(s)
Red	PBY-5A	L/W A6M2	H6K4	L/W F4F
White	B-17E	L/W A6M2	L B5N2	L F4F
Blue	L SBD	L A6M2	L E13A1	L F4F

All aircraft start the Mission at Low altitude. The Mission lasts 4 turns, or until all aircraft on one side are Destroyed. Carrier Force Strike order is based on how many turns your Search Aircraft survives: if Destroyed Turn 1, your enemy Strikes first; if Destroyed on Turn 2 or 3, Strikes are simultaneous; if your Search aircraft survives until Turn 4 or later, you Strike first. If both players choose this Resource during the same Game Turn, Strikes are simultaneous if both aircraft are Destroyed on the same turn (or if one is shot down on Turn 2 and the other on Turn 3). Do not check off any CTF boxes for aircraft lost on either side.

- Radar**
- Clouds Over Target**
- Strikes Pass Each Other** — As per **Corsairs & Hellcats**, except Strikes must be simultaneous.
- Returning Strike** — Add one element (L/W) of surviving Dive Bombers from your Strike to the enemy Strike mission as CAP at Medium altitude or below during the last Target-bound Turn.
- Anvil Attack** — Draw one extra Bomb card for each Torpedo Bomber during the Bomb Turn.
- Armed Search** (US player only) — Before conducting Strike missions, conduct a Strike against one enemy Carrier Task Force (your choice) with a lone L SBD vs. a lone L A6M2.

Duration: 1 Target-Bound, 1 Home-Bound Turns. Do not check off any CTF boxes for aircraft lost on either side.

- Skilled Pilot** — *Runyon* (USN) or *Okumura* (IJN)
- Skilled Pilot** - *Vejtasa* (USN) or *Komachi* (IJN)
- Skilled Pilot** — *Felt* (USN) or *Seki* (IJN)
- Skilled Pilot** - *Larsen* (USN) or *Murata* (IJN)
- Nowhere in Sight**
- Damage Control**
- Faulty Torpedoes** (Japanese Player only) — Draw an additional Bomb card during each US Torpedo attack, and discard the **best** of the results.
- Poor Fighter Direction** — Reduce the Target-Bound duration of one of your Strikes by one Turn.
- Extra CAP**
- Strike Diversion** (Japanese Player only) — If the Japanese Diversionary Force is in play and the US player chose Large or Small Strike, you choose **one** US Strike to attack the Diversionary Force instead.
- Flak Guns** (US Player only)

Resource Notes

Players will recognize most of the Resources as identical to those in the *Eastern Solomons* and *Santa Cruz* campaigns of **Corsairs & Hellcats**. A few have been deleted or added and deserve comment.

- Armed Search** — SBDs scouting at Santa Cruz flew armed with 500-pound bombs, and succeeded in putting *Zuiho* out of action.
- Loaded Flight Deck** — Carrier admirals who fought in the South Pacific were well aware of Midway and the disastrous consequences of being attacked with a strike ready on deck, and all were careful to ensure it never happened again. Players no longer have this Resource available.
- Returning Strike** — At Eastern Solomons, USN Dauntlesses back from attacking *Ryujo* arrived in time to help defend their carriers, and succeeded in shooting down several Japanese bombers. Japanese Vals did the same in the Indian Ocean in April 1942, so I allow both players to use this resource.
- Search Mission** — After Midway, the carrier battles of 1942 featured virtually simultaneous strikes. Carrier admirals were reluctant to launch their strikes without good locating information, and search planes on both sides were successful at locating the enemy carriers at approximately the same time. Rather than having the Resource choice dictate Strike order, I decided that strikes should be simultaneous (the historical norm) unless reconnaissance results dictate otherwise. This resource replaces "Scout Mission" to provide the possibility of different search outcomes.
- Strike Diversion** — Whether intentionally serving as bait or not, *Ryujo* absorbed a major USN strike at Eastern Solomons just as *Shoho* had at Coral Sea.
- Submarine Attack** — Though Japanese submarines lay in ambush, none attacked the American carriers during any of these battles. Instead, the variable size and availability of US CTFs accounts for possible (and historical) Japanese success, so I deleted this Resource.

Praise and Blame

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