

# Zero! — DiF Series Campaign

## Marshall Islands Raid, 1942

BY JAMES CRATE

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

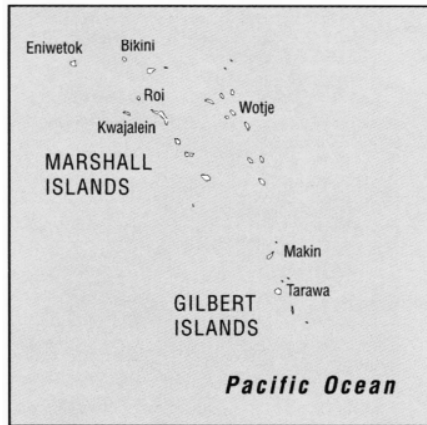
Following the debacle at Pearl Harbor, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz was named as head of the Pacific Fleet. Despite Allied setbacks from Wake to Singapore, Nimitz had no intention of setting up a passive defense. Encouraged by Washington, Nimitz charged Admiral "Bull" Halsey to take Task Force 8, centered around the carrier *Enterprise*, to raid the Marshall Islands. Nimitz also sent Jack Fletcher's Task Force 17, centered around the carrier *Yorktown*, to raid the Gilbert Islands to the south. Although *Yorktown* encountered little resistance, Halsey's flyers got a hot reception in the Marshalls. Halsey sent unescorted SBDs for a surprise raid against Roi Island, and sent his F4Fs to attack Wotje and Tarao. The Japanese response included the A5M4 "Claude" which had previously seen service in China. During the strikes, LTJG Wilmer Rawie scored the US Navy's first air-to-air victory by downing one of the "Claudes". Later in the day, *Enterprise* fighters repulsed attacks on the carrier by Tarao based G3M2 "Neils". Although the American raids did little lasting damage, they did serve to give the Navy aircrews much needed experience and bolstered the American morale.

### RULES SUMMARY

- Missions are flown in order 1, 2, & then 3.
- Subtract bomber airspeed from the Target Bound and Home Bound turns just like normal land Campaigns.
- Conditions for both sides are set, not optional, and may not be moved from one mission to another.
- For a historical game do not use skilled pilots; for a more challenging game, draw a skilled Japanese pilot for Mission 2. - **Important: The G3M Nells may not carry torpedoes.**
- The Fleet Carrier has 2 **Area Flak** and 2 **Target Flak** and suffers damage as follows:

0-3 Undmg	4-8 Dmg	9-13 Crippled	14+ Sunk
( Miss / Hit / Direct / Vital = 0/1/4/7 )			

\*Note that Target Flak for *Enterprise* in 1942 is 2; this differs from the late war carriers found in *Corsairs & Hellcats*.



Check Victory Points after each mission to see mission success.

#### Mission #1

Location Roi Island  
 Target Type Airfield  
 Attacking A/C 2 L/W SBD  
 Alt. & Duration Choose 8/7

#### Mission #2

Location Tarao Island  
 Target Type Dogfight  
 Attacking A/C L/W F4F v L/W A5M  
 Alt. & Duration Choose 6 Turns

#### Mission #3

Location *USS Enterprise*  
 Target Type Fleet Carrier  
 Attacking A/C 4 Nell  
 Alt. & Duration Very Low 7/6

#### Japanese Resources

Mission #1 L/W A5M4 'Claude'  
 Mission #2 None  
 Mission #3 None

#### American Resources

Mission #1 None  
 Mission #2 None  
 Mission #3 L/W F4F

#### Air Group Performance =

US Navy VP — Imperial Japanese Navy VP

Mission #1 +9 VP or more, USN mission victory  
 Mission #2 +5 VP or more, USN mission victory  
 Mission #3 If the *Enterprise* becomes damaged (4-8 damage points), IJN mission victory. If

*Enterprise* is crippled or sunk (9 or more damage points) is an automatic campaign victory for the Japanese

After playing all three missions, simply add up the number of missions won or lost by your side. With an odd number of missions, Mission # 3 is the tiebreaker. Remember though, even if they lose the first two missions, the Japanese can get an automatic campaign victory by crippling or sinking *Enterprise* in Mission #3.

### NOTES ON MARSHALL ISLANDS RAID OF 1 FEBRUARY 1942

I wanted to do this mini-campaign for a couple of reasons. First, it is the only time during the war where F4F "Wildcats" engaged A5M4 "Claudes". Second, this engagement produced the first Air-to-Air kill of the war for the US Navy. Finally, I wanted *Down in Flames* series players to have more scenarios for their **Zero!** game carrier aircraft than just Coral Sea and Midway. This scenario is really intended to be more historical than play balanced. The American player should thoroughly trounce the Japanese player, just like their historical counterparts did. The intention is that *Down in Flames* players can play this mini-campaign, and then go on to Coral Sea and Midway, to see the progression in carrier warfare. For the Japanese player, don't worry; the Americans will have their hands full down the road. And who knows, you might just get lucky against the "Big E". The other thing I tried to do is make the game playable in one sitting. Hopefully I was successful.

If you are interested in reading more about the 1 February Raid of 1942, or any other US Navy fighter actions during the first part of 1942, I recommend John B. Lundstrom's phenomenal book, *The First Team*. You quite simply will not find a finer book on US Navy fighters and fighter pilots during the first six months of World War II. This book was the basis for most of my research for this mini-campaign. It is available from the Naval Institute Press through their website. Have fun and good hunting.

