

Bob Cordory

As one of the founding members of Wargames Development, Bob Cordory has influenced the development of many of the games that we play

I first used Fletcher Pratt's Naval Wargame rules in the 1980s. Eric Knowles - the owner of one of London's alas now defunct wargames shops (The New Model Army) - ran a World War I campaign that lasted for over a year. All the naval battles were fought out using the Fletcher Pratt rules and they were immensely enjoyable.

I hoped that John Curry's game would be as memorable and enjoyable - and it was! I was given command overall of the Japanese fleet, and was assisted by Phil Barker and Rob Doel. Our fleet consisted of:

- A battleship (Yamato);
- Two battlecruisers (Kongo class);
- Three cruisers;
- A flotilla of destroyers;
- Three squadrons of barely trained Naval torpedo bombers.

Our opponents were a force of British battleships, supported by numerous cruisers and destroyers. I ordered the destroyers to act independently and to attack the British with torpedoes should the opportunity arise, whilst the cruisers were to screen the battleship and battlecruisers whilst the latter closed upon the enemy. The torpedo bombers were to attack the British battleships - even though they were unlikely to score any hits - as this would divert their attention from our battle line and disorganise them.

The battle plan worked as well as I had hoped. The Yamato led the battleline, and her broadsides were capable of doing considerable damage to any ship that came within range. At least two British cruisers were badly damaged by 18" shells fired by the Yamato, as was one of the battleships.

Comments about the rules Gunnery: The estimating of the gunnery ranges and the aiming of the guns using firing arrows requires time, and this was not available to the players as John hurried us along all the time. The result was that anyone who could judge distance fairly accurately and fairly quickly could achieve some stunning results. Most players were able to do this at ranges of 6 to 4 feet without trouble, but at longer or shorter distances the accuracy fell off. This seems to be a fairly accurate representation of the problems of naval gunnery.

Torpedoes: Torpedoes do a lot of damage if they manage to hit a target. However they can be avoided if the target turns towards the torpedo's course (combing the tracks). Players must be careful, as it is very easy to cross a torpedo's track during a move, which will result in the torpedo hitting your ship. Ship cards: The loss of speed and guns incrementally requires the umpire to prepare complex record cards (known as ship cards) for each ship and for the players to be able to do quite difficult calculations. Although the results are fair, they do seem over complex at times, especially if you want your game to be fast and furious.

A very good session, and one that I hope will be repeated in the future.