The Fletcher Pratt Naval Game as a Lawn Game by Patrick Sillen, Sweden

I have delighted in every book that she has bought from your site. The aforementioned outdoor naval game is in fact an adaptation of the Fletcher Pratt rules using an inch to the knot and a maximum range for a 12 inch gun of 145 inches. I am using the older gunnery tables and I also skipped the amour penetration table (as recommended by yourself), and since I am focusing on the Russo-Japanese war, I have also done away with aircrafts, mines and torpedoes for now. Torpedoes and mines were in fact common features in this war, but mainly against inactive opponents or during blockades, and I am focusing on recreating the battleship encounters of the pre-dreadnought era.

In addition to the standard set of rules, I also employ written orders (very simple though) for each ship per round and flag orders issued by the flagship of each division (slightly more complex). This seems to work out very well with each player controlling a single ship and an overall commander trying to bring the ships into a coherent fighting formation and this restricted freedom of movement feels very appropriate to this period.

An interesting effect is that the fairly uniform ship design of the Japanese boats makes for an easy fleet to manoeuvre and control, while the motley collection of Russian ships is something of a nightmare in this aspect. I have seen this effect in real life when acting as an overall commander in SSRS - the Swedish equivalent of the British RNLI - where I have commanded no less than twelve different boats of varying size and characteristics during exercises as well as the real thing and I must say that a pattern of ships with similar characteristics is much to prefer.

In the end though, this game is intended to be a very relaxed, friendly and spirited affair, where we wear our straw hats and discuss all things naval while playing, laughing and zipping sherry. Most of the players are friends (gamers and non-gamers) since many years and the social part of the whole event is by far the most important - that and the fact that our (fairly substantial) lawn could be used for something a bit more interesting (at least in my opinion) than the odd game of badminton or crocket...

This particular occasion was mainly about acting on fleet orders and manoeuvring ships and so it was not a full Fletcher Pratt game but rather an exercise in moving ships in formation. We were fully content with setting everything up disregarding any play-balance and moving fleets into interesting positions whenever we felt like discussing a particular situation...
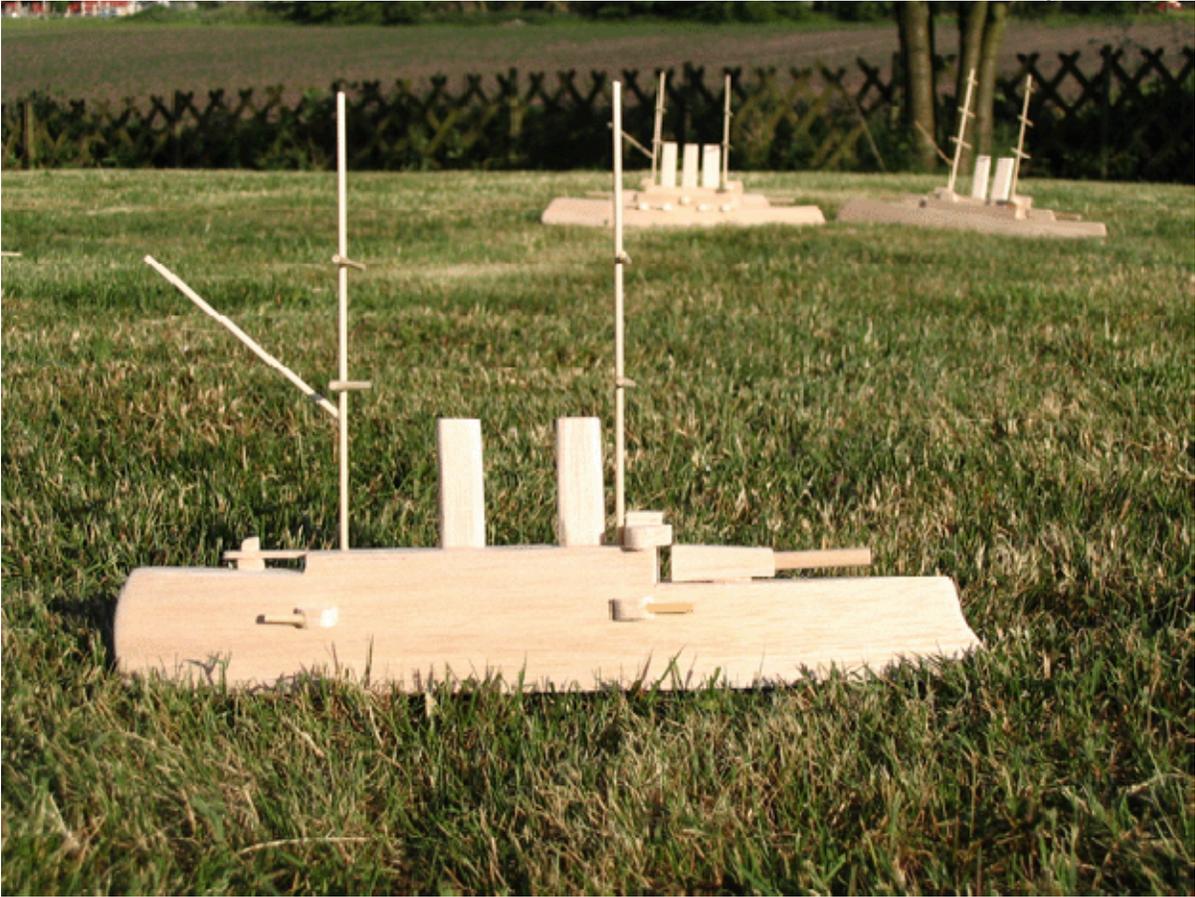
Pic 1: The Japanese battle line consisting of Mikasa (flag), Shikishima, Fuji and Asahi - all turning in succession...
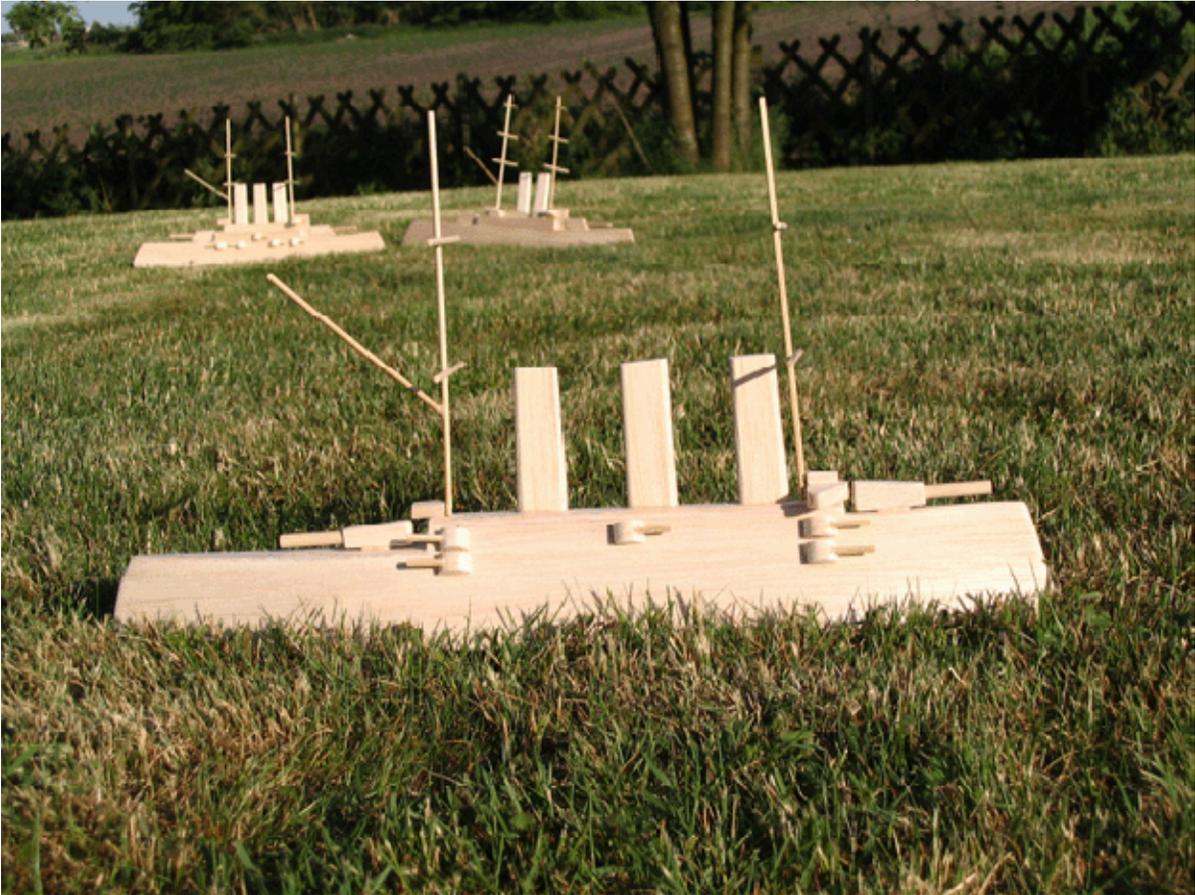
Pic 2: Part of the Russian line consisting of Osliabia and Imperator Nikolaj I...

Pic 3: Close-up of the Imperator Nikolai I with Mikasa and Shikishima in the background...

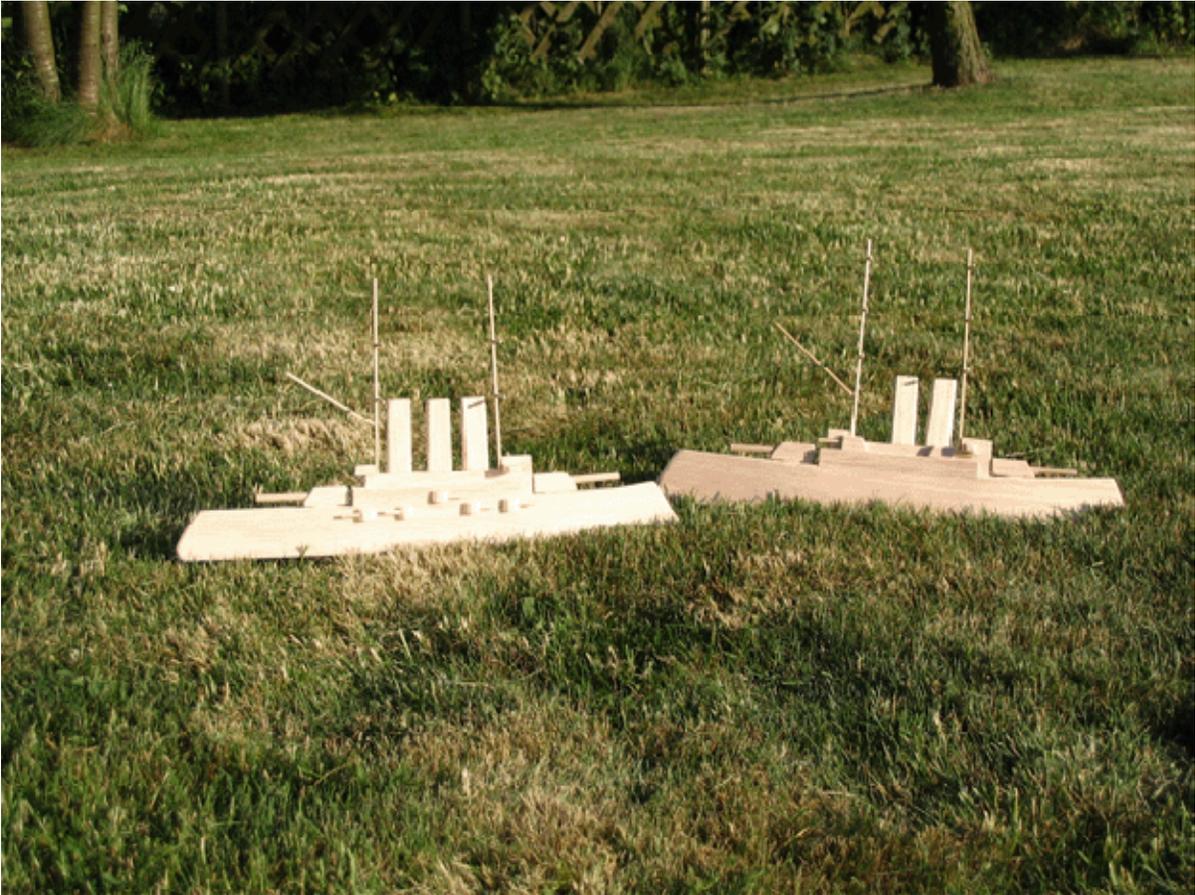Pic 4: Close-up of the Osliabia with Mikasa and Shikishima in the background...

Pic 5: The same ships with the addition of Asahi and Fuji executing a line abreast turn...

Pic 6: A spectacular miss in communications results in an equally spectacular ramming of Mikasa by Shikishima - prompting a round of applauds from all the rest of the participants
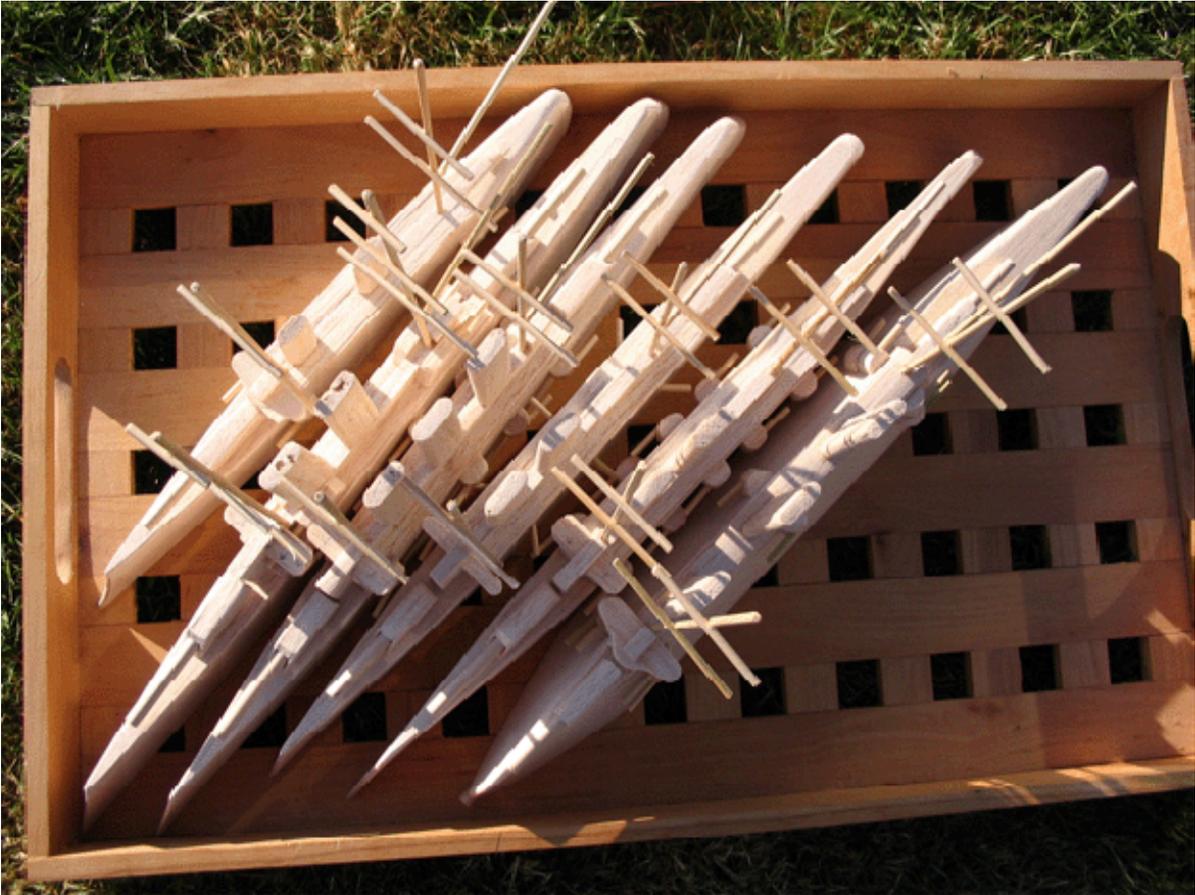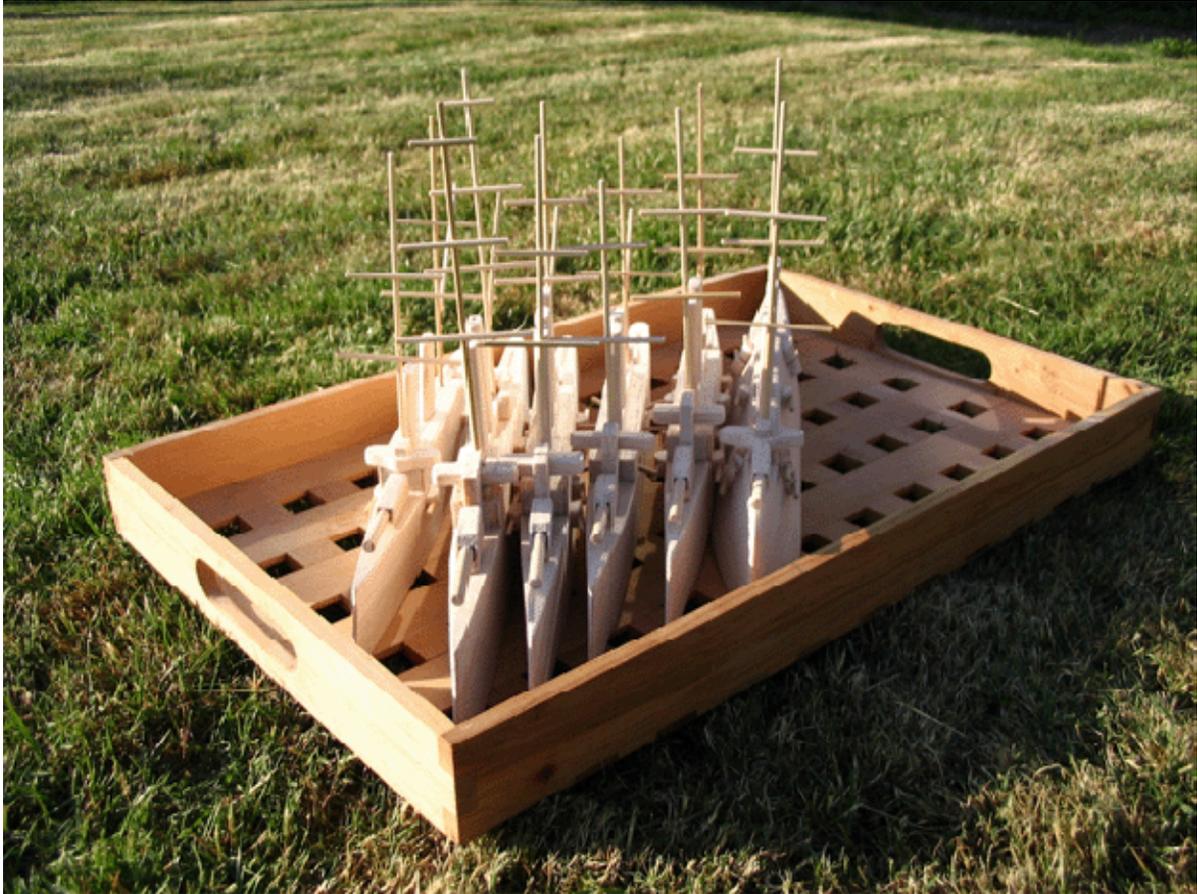
(including the umpire)...

Pic 7: The six ships on a tray - Osliabia in front...

Pic 8: View from above demonstrating the semi-profile outline of the ships...

Pic 9: View from the front demonstrating the contraction of twin gun barrels into a single gun barrel...

Two more Russian ships have been completed since this occasion - namely the Poltava and the Retvizan - and a third one is half-way completed - the Kniaz Suvarov - with a few more Borodino class ships planned for the future. I am hoping to set up one or two major engagements this summer and there certainly seems to be a genuine interest for it among my player-friends so getting a fair number of participants to join does not seem to be a problem...