

# Cauldron: Battle for Gazala



EXCLUSIVE RULES v4.1  
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## 10.0 INTRODUCTION

*Cauldron* is a simulation of the battle in Libya between forces of the British Commonwealth and those of Germany and Italy. The Germans conducted a wide flanking maneuver south around

the British defenses to strike toward Tobruk.

### 10.1 FIRST PLAYER

The German player is the first player throughout the game (see 3.0).

### 11.0 REINFORCEMENTS

The British player receives six specific reinforcement units only during the game (see 11.1).

The German player receives no reinforcements.

### 11.1 QUANTITY OF REINFORCEMENTS

GAME TURN SIX	
Unit Type:	Hexes:
5-4-15	1201
3-4-9	1201
GAME TURN EIGHT	
1-2-9	608
GAME TURN 11	
5-4-15	1201
3-4-9	1201
GAME TURN 14	
3-4-9	1201

### 11.2 When REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE

At the end of the movement phase (reinforcements may not move during the turn they arrive), mobile units that arrive at the end of the movement phase may not move during the mobile movement phase.

### 11.3 WHERE REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE

In the hexes listed under 11.1.

### 11.4 REINFORCEMENTS AND COMBAT

Reinforcements may participate in combat normally during the combat phase of the same turn they arrive, if they arrive in a hex adjacent to an accessible enemy unit. If a reinforcement unit's arrival hex is occupied by any enemy unit, the reinforcement may not arrive until a game turn wherein that hex is no longer occupied by any enemy unit.

## 12.0 LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Each side has supply symbols along the edge of the map, representing their lines of communication to rear areas off the map. There are two British supply symbols (hexes 1201 and 1410), and two German supply symbols (hexes 0734 and 2924); if any supply symbol hex is

currently occupied by an enemy unit, the side that lost its supply symbol will lose half (rounded down) its support fire marker allotment out of each subsequent turn's allotment while that supply symbol hex is occupied by any enemy unit. If enemy units currently occupy two supply symbol hexes, that side loses its support fire allotment.

### 13.0 ENEMY ZONES OF CONTROL

Reinforcements may be placed into enemy zone of control, but must abide by the normal rules (see 6.0).

### 14.0 MINEFIELDS

Minefield hexsides are represented on the map, and are considered permanent terrain features that can neither be created nor destroyed during the course of the game. A minefield friendly to a player at the beginning of the game remains friendly throughout the game. Likewise, enemy minefields do not become friendly when captured; rather, their effects remain throughout the game. **Axis minefields are blue and Allied are brown.**

#### 14.1 FRIENDLY MINEFIELDS

Friendly minefields have no combat effects on any friendly units, although friendly units must expend +2 movement points to cross a friendly minefield hexside, even via a trail or a road.

#### 14.2 ENEMY MINEFIELDS

A unit may only move across an enemy minefield hexside if it occupies an adjacent hex at the beginning of its movement. A unit that moves across an enemy minefield hexside must expend all of its movement allowance to do so, even via a trail or a road, and stop in the entered hex.

A unit may retreat through an enemy minefield, but is depleted as a result (or eliminated if already depleted or a one-sided unit).

**NOTE:** Zones of control extend into enemy minefield hexes normally. No unit (except commando units) may move from EZOC to EZOC across a minefield hexside.

Any attacks on an enemy unit across a minefield hexside must be resolved using the minefield terrain type on the Combat Results Table. Attacks on any enemy unit across a friendly minefield hexside (friendly to the attacker) suffer no penalty.

#### 14.3 FORITIFIED BOXES

The various British minefield hexes on the map are considered fortified boxes. They are minefields per 14.0 normally, except any British unit occupying a fortified box may ignore any retreat result (whether a defender retreat or an attacker retreat). Any retreating British unit outside a fortified box must continue its retreat normally; its retreat is not cancelled by moving into or through a friendly controlled fortified box.

Fortified boxes may not be destroyed during the course of the game.

German units never derive any benefit if occupying a fortified box.

#### 15.0 TOBRUK AIRFIELD

If the airfield in hex 0709 is occupied by any Axis unit, the UK player loses one support fire marker out of each subsequent turn's allotment that airfield hex is occupied.

**NOTE:** The British player does not lose any support fire markers if the Bir El Gubi airfield (2707) or El Adem airfield (1510) is occupied by any Axis unit. The occupation of those airfields by any player has no effect.

### 16.0 ESCARPMENT HEXSIDES

Movement across escarpment hexsides is prohibited except via trail or road; however, movement within any escarpment hex is unaffected, and is considered to be desert terrain.

No units may attack across any escarpment hexside, except via trail or road in which case, combat is resolved using the escarpment terrain type on the Combat Results Table

### 17.0 ROMMEL'S FEINT

During the first game turn, no Allied unit may move during the movement phase or the mobile movement phase, unless adjacent to an Axis unit. After the first game turn, all units may be moved normally.

### 18.0 VICTORY CONDITIONS

The German player wins the game if **he occupies Tobruk and he can**, at any time (even if only momentarily), demonstrate a path of uninterrupted hexes (neither occupied by enemy units nor within any enemy unit's ZOC) from Tobruk (0608) to either of the two German supply symbol hexes (**hexes 0734 or 2924**).

**NOTE:** the path of hexes may not cross any minefield hexside unless both hexes astride it are occupied by Axis units.

The British player wins the game if, as of the end of the last game turn, he can demonstrate a path of uninterrupted hexes (neither occupied by enemy units, nor within any enemy unit's ZOC) from Tobruk (0608) to the UK

supply symbol hex (1201) on the east edge of the map.

If neither side is able to achieve its victory conditions the game is a draw.

If either player has lost twice as many or more units (eliminated) than the other as of the end of the last game turn, the victory condition is downgraded. That is, if he has won the game per the above paragraph, his victory is downgraded to a draw. Or, if the game ended as a draw, that draw is downgraded to a defeat.

### 19.0 SCENARIOS

*Cauldron* has one historic scenario of the German attempt to capture the vital port of Tobruk in Libya, and the British defense of Cyrenaica.

Set-up the following units in the hexes indicated below. The map is printed with the set-up locations of each starting unit included in the game. The set-up locations have no other impact on play.

#### GERMANY

Unit Type:	Hexes:
1-2-12	334
1-2-12	132
2-3-12	232
2-3-12	332
4-5-15	2723
4-5-15	2822
1-2-12	2823
1-2-12	2824
1-2-12	2825
2-3-12	2926
3-2-20	2820
4-5-15	2623

4-5-15	2724
1-2-12	2624
1-2-12	2725
2-3-12	2726
3-2-20	2819
1-2-12	2921
1-2-12	2922
2-3-12	2923
2-3-12	2925
3-2-20	2818
1-2-12	2920

#### ITALY

Unit Type:	Hexes:
1-2-7	533
1-2-7	733
2-3-12	632
2-3-9	832
2-3-9	933
2-3-7	1231
2-3-7	1031
2-3-9	1730
2-3-9	1530
2-3-12	2128
2-3-9	2028
2-3-9	2228
2-2-12	2329
2-3-12	2426
2-2-12	2525
2-2-12	2425
2-2-12	2326

#### UNITED KINGDOM

Unit Type:	Hexes:
4-4-9	228
4-4-9	429
4-4-9	730
4-5-9	928
4-5-9	1126
4-6-9	1526
3-4-9	812
3-4-9	412
3-3-9	1008
1-2-9	1610
1-2-12	1122
3-5-9	1222
3-5-9	1022
3-5-12	626
3-5-12	726
4-3-15	1516
4-3-15	1416
4-3-15	1316
1-2-12	1315
4-3-15	1818
4-3-15	1720
4-3-15	1819
1-2-12	1718
4-6-12	1417
5-4-15	2316
5-4-15	2216
5-4-15	2215
1-2-12	2115
4-5-12	2816
2-4-12	2620
4-4-9	2708
4-8-9	2423

## 20.0 GAME NOTES

The name for the Battle of Gazala is itself an irony insofar as it implies precisely what General Rommel intended the British to believe...that his marginal attack towards Gazala near the Libyan coast would be the *schwerpunkt* of his main assault. In fact, Rommel prodded his mobile forces far to the south, pivoting them around the Bir Hacheim strongpoint (the furthest extent of the Allied fortifications) and then thrust them into the unfortified southern flank of the British defensive network. It is at this stage that the game Cauldron begins.

Tobruk, once again, was the crux of the battle; as a port, and particularly because of its natural breakwater geography shielding the harbor from the Mediterranean Sea, Tobruk was probably the most important anchorage in all of North Africa west of Alexandria (as it had been, in fact, for thousands of years). Rommel's intended thrust into Egypt could not be possible without first capturing Tobruk, and both sides knew it. It is no wonder that the British undertook such elaborate efforts to sew innumerable mines across nearly fifty miles of desert (from the coast southward as the crow flies) to defend a city of only 5,000 inhabitants.

Rommel's plan (known to the Axis as Operation Venezia) was a dichotomy of boldness and riskiness; the offensive absolutely surprised the British command, although it was not without its setbacks...Rommel had tasked the Italian Ariete Division to assault and capture the Bir Hacheim fortified "box" (as the British termed their various outposts in Cyrenaica), but encountered a full brigade of stalwart Free French that meted out punishing fire from their

heavily fortified position. As the lynchpin of Rommel's pivoting maneuver, Bir Hacheim's stiff resistance upset the offensive's tempo, and so the entire battle then began to develop into a wider engagement of dueling armored vehicles further out in the middle of the desert...an area that became known as the "Cauldron". This presented a severe danger to the German offensive if any British mobile units could get around and isolate Rommel's panzers (which were now very far afield while fighting to reach Tobruk). Rommel was thus forced into a defensive posture while he detached an entire division to double-back and overrun Bir Hacheim, although the French brigade there continued to hold their position steadfastly nonetheless; Bir Hacheim had become the proverbial—almost literal—thorn in the Desert Fox' side.

It was then that the British overplayed their hand; General Auchinleck ordered a massive armored counterattack that benefitted the Germans' well-honed defensive tactics—particularly their employment of superior guns—that mauled the attacking British tank formations. Rommel was quick to exploit his serendipitous ambush with aggressive panzer assaults that inflicted additional losses upon the decimated British armor, which soon forced them into a wholesale retreat. British tank losses were so severe (~75% by some estimates) that the defense of Tobruk became practicably untenable thereafter, compelling Auchinleck to order a withdrawal of all Allied forces to more defensible positions to the east, and thus the abandonment of Tobruk altogether. Fortunately for the Allies, Rommel's own losses exceeded his available replacements, and so the Germans could not pursue the

withdrawing British into Egypt...at least not immediately.

In game terms, the Allies field nearly as many units as the Axis (if including the arriving reinforcements), but nearly 100 more aggregate combat strength points (i.e., attack and defense strength points). However, most Allied units are out of position during the first turn of the game, and the German allotment of Support Fire markers is appreciably greater than the British (i.e., 11 versus 6). Nevertheless, the German player must be careful about his casualties because the British can afford "Ex" (Exchange) results more easily than the Germans; the loss of combat power for each "Ex" result borne by the Axis will be felt more acutely, particularly over the long term. Ergo, a battle of attrition is an inefficient German strategy, to say the least...especially when considering that the German player is granted 26 game turns to reach Tobruk...ample time to orchestrate a methodical campaign.

Operationally, the primary concern for both sides is the exposure of their respective forward supply hexes (El Adem for the British, and the depot in hex 2924 for the Axis...the latter representing continuous supply convoys feeding Rommel's offensive). These locations become strategically important during the game, just as they were historically. Players will understand why the Allied position at Bir Hacheim cannot be bypassed, and also why El Adem was the focal point of the fighting in the "Cauldron". If a supply hex becomes captured, the very tangible consequences (i.e., that player's allotment of Support Fire markers becomes halved) are exceptionally problematic...probably more so

## CAULDRON COMBAT RESULTS TABLE

Terrain Type	Combat Differential (attacking strength minus defending strength)											
	-1	0	+1	+2, +3	+4, +5	+6, +7	+8, +9	+10				
Mines	-1	0	+1	+2, +3	+4, +5	+6, +7	+8, +9	+10				
Broken, Escarpment, Town	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2, +3	+4, +5	+6, +7	+8, +9	+10		
Ditch	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2, +3	+4, +5	+6, +7	+8, +9	+10	
Desert	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2, +3	+4, +5	+6, +7	+8, +9	+10
Die Roll	Result											
1	(A)	A3	A2	•	Ex	Ex	D2	D2	D2	D3	De	De
2	(A)	(A)	A3	A2	•	Ex	Ex	Ex	D2	D2	D3	De
3	(A)	(A)	(A)	A3	A2	•	Ex	Ex	Ex	D2	D2	D3
4	(A)	(A)	(A)	(A)	A3	A2	•	Ex	Ex	Ex	D2	D2
5	Ae	(A)	(A)	(A)	(A)	A3	A2	•	Ex	Ex	Ex	D2
6	Ae	Ae	(A)	(A)	(A)	(A)	(A)	A1	•	Ex	Ex	Ex

**De** = The defending unit is eliminated.

**D3** = The defending unit must retreat three hexes (or deplete one unit of the defending player's choice, instead; see 7.8).

**D2** = The defending unit must retreat two hexes (or deplete one unit of the defending player's choice, instead; see 7.8).

**Ex** = One attacking unit and one defending unit must be flipped to their depleted side (or eliminated if already depleted).

**A1** = The attacking unit(s) must retreat one hex (or deplete one unit of the attacking player's choice, instead; see 7.8)

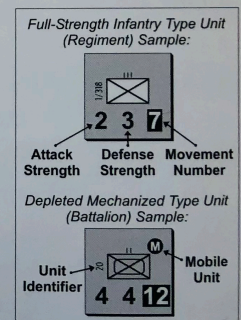
**A2** = The attacking unit(s) must retreat two hexes (or deplete one unit of the attacking player's choice, instead; see 7.8)

**A3** = The attacking unit(s) must retreat three hexes (or deplete one unit of the attacking player's choice, instead; see 7.8)

**(A)** = One attacking unit must be depleted (or eliminated if already depleted).

**Ae** = All attacking units are eliminated.

• = No effect.



for the German player (any loss of Support Fire markers would downshift the entire Axis offensive, perhaps even halting it altogether). The British player's situation is substantively different because he can withdraw his forces to a defensive position behind the ring of anti-tank ditches around Tobruk's perimeter...and hope to hold out. But this situation is not ideal at all when the enemy can wield considerably more Support Fire markers. In view of the game's length, no defensive line can be expected to withstand repeated attacks that are augmented by surplus support fire (unless, perhaps, enemy casualties have been excessive — or at least significant — up to then). This very circumstance is what compelled Auchinleck to order the remnant Allied forces to retreat back to Egypt (rather than attempt to hold

Tobruk) after the devastation of British armor in the Cauldron.

In this way the game replicates the actual battle well. Despite the historic outcome, the victory conditions in Cauldron are very achievable for either side. Of course, the Axis ultimately won the battle, but Rommel had considered his situation to be very tenuous from the outset...fully aware of the risks involved (calculated risks, albeit). Indeed, throughout Rommel's entire military career 'risks' were emblematic of his style of battle, though they were not always lucrative. At the Battle of Gazala, Rommel's risk to dash around the British defenses — hundreds of miles from his supply sources — would prove to be, arguably, his most profitable gamble of the war.

## CREDITS

**Design:** Howard Barasch

**Redesign:** Eric R. Harvey

**Cartography:** Redmond A. Simonsen

**Map Graphics:** Joseph Youst

**Counter Graphics:** Eric R. Harvey & Larry Hoffman

**Rules Booklet Layout:** Callie Cummins

**Development and Playtesters**

(original team): Frank Davis, Manfred F. Milkuhn, Larry Catalano, Kevin Zucker, Linda D. Mosca.

**Playtesters** (redesign): Eric R. Harvey and J. Scott Morris.

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