

DEVELOPER'S NOTEBOOK

Saratoga: The Turning Point of the American Revolution, 1777

BY ANDY LEWIS



Saratoga was a nice package when I received it. The game was always intended as an introductory level game, but with enough stuff for the experienced player. I really didn't have to make many

changes. The changes made were to make things easier, more natural, and a better lead-in to other wargames.

This meant the first change was eliminating close combat occurring *within* a hex. Combat was conducted this way initially since muskets of this era didn't have the range to shoot the scaled distance of a hex width with any accuracy. The change to close combat, between adjacent hexes, was decided on, historically, by the fact that combatants could actually be near the edge of two hexes when they fought. This was the biggest change made during the development process.

During the development process, the only changes made to the victory conditions were how Freeman's Farm was handled and the addition of the American garrison hexes. Originally, the British player had to control just the farm hex (1015), but he *had* to have control of it to gain a marginal victory. This limited the options that the British could try. If they didn't go for the Farm, the choices were to gain a substantial or decisive victory, or else lose. In addition, the British player gained three points for accomplishing the capture of Freeman's Farm. This put the British in a very strong position and reduced the desire to drive on the Heights. The published victory conditions for Freeman's Farm do two things. They make it more of a strategy choice to go for the Farm or not and make it much easier for the Americans to nullify control of the Farm late in the game if they've been driven off the Farm early on.

The garrison hexes, for the Americans, were added to eliminate some of the game players awesome intelligence capability. We found the American player being able to move all of Gates men to the Bemis Heights Line directly in front of the British. This meant it was suicide for the British player to try and take the Heights, which caused the release of Gates men. In addition, it meant if Gates was released early enough, the American was going to win the game. So why play the game, just roll for Gates release. The garrison hex rule means the American has to guard

against the possibility of unknown British units moving against another part of his line versus what he can see. It also helps to create the true nature of Gates' reaction to the situation, defense first, which was in sharp contrast to Arnold's going out to meet the enemy.

The combat system only changed a little during the development process. The Close Combat Table was modified to add the automatic capture results. This allowed captures to occur more often, which is what actually happened in the battle. The concept of momentum was added. This allowed the players to overcome some of those disaster rolls. It had the side benefit of allowing us to give the players a way, albeit an expensive way, to prevent those horrible double turns for your opponent after you've mistakenly left yourself too exposed.

The other part of combat which was changed was the Tactical Matrix. First, the chart was balanced. This meant making it so there was no definite picks in situations which couldn't be beat. I then added the restrictions on use of some of the chits. This helped to bring the importance of the leaders leading the battle, instead of just rallying the troops behind the scenes to the fore front. Now you have to think a little more about where your leaders are needed most.

The publication process took longer than expected. There was a positive benefit from this. The designer, Mark Miklos, has been working on the next game in the series, **Brandywine Creek**, which is a two front battle and more open. The extra time allowed us to refine and clarify the rules in a few areas, which are more specific to the open nature of **Brandywine Creek**. Therefore, we don't expect



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the game system to change at all for the second game. The only new rules to learn will be the battle specific rules.

An Addendum

Since the Developer's Notes aren't in the rulebook, I get the luxury of responding to some of the early comments. One comment is the outcome of the game is very dependent on when Gates is released. To a certain extent, this is true. However, I don't believe it is a serious short coming or a fatal flaw as some do. Playtesting showed that Gates release is something that has to be factored into your changing strategy as the game progresses. The British need to keep from being too exposed if Gates is released early, but the Americans can't base their entire strategy on Gates saving the day, because it doesn't always happen - actually it's pretty rare. The thought of early or late, in terms of Gates release, needs to be considered just as importantly as what happens if your opponent

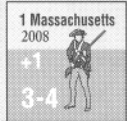


gets that back-to-back turn, which you didn't plan for. Remember Zones of Control don't extend into forest hexes. Once you're past the Freeman's Farm area, the battlefield becomes very fluid.

The other comment that I've heard is about replay value. A game of this

size, with such a closed battlefield, would appear to have limited options. I know from the development process that there are plenty of strategies to try and react to. The playtesters found the game to be a close and balanced game. With the high variability and uncertainty of who wins a close combat, even if one uses the same strategy and opening moves every game, once the battle is joined it may go in a myriad of directions. Just see what happens if the British Grenadiers lose a step, or worse yet, get captured in their first close combat. I'll admit that this game probably won't stand up well to a hundred playings by one person; although I still enjoy playing it and seeing how each game unfolds. The game wasn't developed to be on everyone's most played list. It was designed to introduce new players to the hobby and to be a short fun game, which could be played a couple of times in an evening or used in a one day game tournament.

Saratoga

Turning Point of the American Revolution, 1777
Published: 1998
Game Design: Mark S. Miklos
Game Developer: Andy Lewis
Art Director: Rodger B. MacGowan

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|  1 Massachusetts 2008 +1 3-4 |  Burgoyne 1830 1-2-6 |  21 Fusiliers 1830 +1 4-4 |
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Contents: 88 Color Counters (5/8 inch); One 22x34 inch Map; Rulebook; One 10-sided die; Charts & Tables; Bookcase Box
Time Scale: One hour per turn
Map Scale: 200 yards per hex
Unit Scale: Regimental
Players: 1-2

How I came to Develop Saratoga

by Andy Lewis

I never had aspirations of being a game designer or developer. In fact, I never tinkered with the rules of any wargames I ever bought. I played them as the designer and developer had intended. So why did I develop a game?

I've been involved in this hobby since I was nine years old, which means I've been playing wargames for twenty-six years. I was fortunate to grow up on the East Coast so I could attend all the big conventions. My first convention was Origins II back in 1976. I was familiar with the designers and developers in the industry. I could point them out in awe. In 1990, I purchased Avalon Hill's *March Madness* when it was published. I looked through all the neat team labels and found several errors. I thought this was crazy; with a little attention to detail, it should have been easy to get all the labels right. I immediately sent a letter to Avalon Hill complaining and stating that if the problem was not enough playtesters, then they could sign me up. Well, they did.

I got hooked up with the GMT Game Company when I was living in the Los Angeles area and met Gene Billingsley at one of the Hyatt Hotel

Conventions, held near L.A. International Airport (LAX). We got to talking about gaming, and I liked Gene's vision, in terms of the future of GMT. So I started doing some playtest work for him. I worked mainly in the area of rules editing, since that's the part of the game, I think, that should be air tight. I'm not a good role-player. I want the rules to tell me exactly what I can and can't do.

I knew Mark Miklos, *Saratoga's* designer, from previous Avaloncons. In 1995, we sat down over this game (*Saratoga*) he'd been designing. He knew I was a playtester and wanted my feedback on his game. I was immediately impressed by the quality of the playtest kit - it was better than some published games I had seen. Mark explained the system to me. It grabbed my interest, so we sat down later, and played a few turns. I knew GMT was looking for a game that was short enough for tournament play. I thought this game just might be the one they were looking for.

I spoke with Gene about *Saratoga* and he was interested. Previously, Gene and I had talked about me possibly developing a game for GMT. Another company had, earlier, asked me to develop a game for them, but I wasn't sure I had the skills needed. I wasn't ready at that time, but

when Gene said he'd publish *Saratoga* if I developed it, I decided, O.K., let's give it a try.

I didn't get rich working on *Saratoga*. My pay for this game project can be measured in cents-per-hour (CPO). I worked on it, because this hobby has provided me so much fun and camaraderie over the years, that I wanted to do my part to see it grow and thrive. Most people in this industry make games because they love it. They don't make tons of money. Most have real full-time jobs and design/develop/produce games during whatever free-time/family-time they can find. These people are fun to play games with. I want to lend my support to their efforts. In part, because I hope that someday my son, as he grows, will have the opportunity to interact and have fun with people like this. People who interact over games that are mental challenges. Although he's only 14 months old now, he's already been to two Avaloncons, and he is as hooked on the people in the hobby as his parents are.

Saratoga is the latest step in my growth in the wargaming hobby. I hope you enjoy the game and I hope you are looking forward to the next game in our American Revolutionary War Series, *Brandywine Creek*. If there's something you don't like, please drop me a line. I like feedback, so I can make each project the best it can be.



Map Legend
Scale: 200 yds per hex

| | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| | |
| Clear | Earthworks |
| | |
| Forest | Timber |
| | |
| Marsh | Garrison |
| | |
| Creek | Bridge |
| | |
| Track | Bemis Hgts Line |
| | |
| British Vic. Hex | American Vic. Hex |



Saratoga

September 19, 1777



RBM Sketch Map
By Rodger B. MacGowan ©1998
Note: May be photocopied as Player-Aid.

RULES CLARIFICATIONS

Saratoga, 1777

(Official Clarifications as of 8/25/98)

2.1.1 Actually for the Americans the bands are the same, but the counter backgrounds are different to indicate Arnold's and Gates' Wings.

2.1.1 The Germans have a green band, not orange.



2.2 The Momentum Chit is incorrectly shown as a Tactics Chit in the examples. It is its own type of chit.

See 9.5 for details.

4.3 **Very Important:** The rulebook shows dots for several of the entries. These should each be worth one-half (½) point.

9.4.3 **Addition:** Add the following to the end of this rule: "Each Close Combat must involve either just one attacking hex or just one defending. For example, one attacking hex versus two defending hexes or two attacking hexes versus one defending hex are legal, but two attacking hexes versus two defending hexes in a single Close Combat is illegal."

The paragraph at the top of page 12 that begins "Pin markers are removed from all..." should have a 10.1.9.1 case indication before the paragraph.

10.2.1 **Change the rule to read:** "A unit must retreat into a hex not adjacent to an enemy unit if possible. In addition, the unit must retreat towards friendly lines if possible. Friendly lines are defined as the north mapboard edge for the British and the south mapboard edge for the Americans."

Historical commentary on page 14: The subtitle should read "Both sides seemed determined to conquer or die."

Historical commentary: Part of the text was accidentally deleted. Please insert the following at the end of the first column on page 15 before continuing to the second column

"...the keynote of the campaign. In orders of the day he said, 'The Army embarks tomorrow to approach the enemy. We are to contend for the King and the Constitution of Great Britain, to win-...'"

Close Combat DRM Table:

The close combat modifier for ravine is -2 (as indicated on the Terrain Effects Chart) not -1.

Terrain Clarifications:

The following hex is considered Marsh: 1929. The following hexes are considered Clear: 0811, 0916, 1011, 1110, 1117, and 2022. The following hexes are considered Forest: 0417, 0517, 0815, 1024, 1124, 1205, 1206, 1216, 1418, 1611, 1712, 1713, 1719, 1818, 1902, 1918, and 1922.

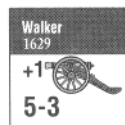
Saratoga Game Questions

1) **Question:** *If a unit retreats into a hex which is scheduled for close combat, but that hex' close combat hasn't been resolved, what happens?*

Answer: The retreated unit does not contribute any strength to the calculation. In addition, it may not be used as the lead unit. If its side suffers any result, the previously retreated unit must make a morale check; if it passes, it must retreat one hex; if it fails; it suffers a "D" result [See 10.1.4].

2) **Question:** *Does the above answer apply for units retreating from Fire combat to a hex which then undergoes close combat? Would such a retreat trigger a close combat?*

Answer: No, there is no penalty for retreating from Fire into Close Combat. Yes.



3) **Question:** *If an artillery unit is in a hex with other units that undergoes close combat, and a result occurs such as an "R" or a "D," which states, "the other friendly units in the close combat must make a morale check..." do the artillery units make a morale check? I ask, because technically artillery isn't involved in the close combat.*

Answer: Yes, the artillery takes a morale check. It's involved – it just can't contribute anything without possibly hitting friendlies as well.

4) **Question:** *If there's an attack that goes solely across "bad" hexsides (such as one unit attacking across a creek and another attacking upslope), I assume there's a -1 modifier?*

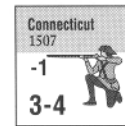
Answer: Yes

5) **Question:** *Are Forest hexes those with completely filled hexes, mostly filled, or even a single tree symbol?*

Answer: As 2.1, states "the type of hex is determined by the majority of terrain in the hex."

6) **Question:** *If there are attacking units which are adjacent to only one defending hex, can they make a diversion [9.3.3] and not attack at all but stay in place?*

Answer: No.



7) **Question:** *What units are "American Militia"?*

Answer: They are the units with the kneeling icon. See the example

on page 2.

8) **Question:** *What does winning Initiative do for you?*

Answer: You must take the Initiative player-turn.

9) **Question:** *Does the attacker have to advance when a R/R result is obtained? Can the attacker advance when a R/R result is obtained?*

Answer: No. No.

10) **Question:** *Can a leader leave a Pin hex?*

Answer: No.

11) **Question:** *Is the "first Rifle shot" bonus for each side, or only the side that gets off the first shot?*

Answer: First rifle shot refers to each unit, so in Saratoga both sides get a first fire. In the next game there are few more rifle units.

