

A Few Words Of Advice

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I'd like to outline my essay as follows – A few words about bidding and then some about technology. After that some general game playing tips and finally specific strategies. Hopefully it will be worthwhile reading.

Bidding:

I think that the game is fair at 15 or 17. I think at 18, I would like to be axis, even if a PE bid was not allowed. Guys like Russell, Demonbarf and Kyle will play the axis against me at 15 oftentimes, and I think I'm a better player as allies (evidently they think they are better at axis than I am at allies, and I'm not arguing with that).

Lately, I feel my game has become more balanced relative to many of the other players out there. By this I mean I gain more by playing to my opponents weakness than I lose by playing my weaker side.

Most of the players that I play against I have played enough times to have formed an opinion on which side they prefer – so I can bid accordingly. Another way to "scout" a player is to simply check out their statistics, which includes win/loss and games played with either side – this info makes it impossible for one-sided players to hide, or at least pay dearly in the bidding process.

That said, I will often say to an opponent who I know and respect: "how about we call the bid 17 and u can pick sides". I won't do that for demon or Russell though, because I think they are both very good with the axis, and I'd rather take 17 than give it with them. With alliedplayer, I think I'd rather give 17.

Strategy wise, to that end, I suggest that every player strive to improve whichever side they feel they are weaker with. The best way to improve, with either side, is to really try and put yourself in your opponent's shoes and see what moves he made that were really good and what moves he made that weren't so tough to counter. With 17 I will always put 1ee/3lib/tank Kwangtung most times, this is the placement that I think puts the right amount of firepower throughout the board. It is also the placement that I know how to play in the best fashion, so I like it.

Under DB1 rules, I think it is next to impossible to win as axis without industrial technology or heavy bombers. My axis strategy is built around this principle.

As allies, I used to think that rolling dice with the USA was a good strategy, but now I'm not so sure – a lot of players still do it, but lately I have not except in super desperate situations. You can win games vs. Japanese tech without rolling ANY dice, of that I am sure. To summarize this thought – I think that rolling dice with Japan is cost effective most of the time, while rolling with the USA is not, i.e. – the tech dice opportunity cost is greater for the USA than it is for Japan. Plus, Japan can more effectively utilize tech advances when it gets them because of its superior income.

General game playing tips:

The two most important phases of a turn are the weapons development and the purchasing phases. It is very important to have a good (if not perfect) idea of what you are going to do during combat BEFORE teching and especially before making your purchase. This is very hard to do, particularly with USA and Japan, but work at

it, because setting up good (if not perfect) troop/tranny ratios is very important. I still find myself with sitting infantry or empty trannies – more often sitting infantry, but that's a point I will cover during Japan and USA.

Generally, the higher rated player, if playing for rate, should try to minimize the dice's affect on the game, while the lower rated player should use his rate to his advantage, either through actual attacks or bluffs. AlliedPlayer covers this topic much better than I do in his BOP thread entitled "20 ways to beat AlliedPlayer".

Specific strategic thoughts and principles that I use for the game:

Depending on placement I will do one of 2 things with Russia:

1. attack Ukraine 8/3/2 and go fighter/sub/trn vs. sub/trn

-OR-

2. Attack Ukraine 8/3, go 2 fighters in Baltic and sub v sub

The second choice is a bit more risky – I will generally only use it against a highly rated player, as I would like to minimize dice impact on the game vs. lower players. For that same reason I will rarely hit Manchuria. I have seen it work very well for players, but it can also go poorly. Not only can you hit too little, sometimes u can hit too much, especially if you take the battle 2 rounds. For me, the risk outweighs the reward, and I won't do it – I would maybe do it with the fighter, but that 2nd fighter is more valuable to me in Europe.

In Ukraine, I hate having to retreat and leave Germany with its 5th fighter alive – 6 planes really make it tough to move your navies around. I will retreat the battle if I will take it with 6 ground units or less remaining...if I have 7 ground units and he has only the fighter left, I think I would stay and fight. This is assuming 1 EE bid, 0 or 2 changes the dynamic.

On non-com I leave an infantry in SFE, stack Yakut and move the tank to novo, sometimes I put 1 infantry in novo and the tank to Yakut if it seems likely that Japan hits sink. Then I go 1 infantry to Caucasus (unless I want my opponent to take his navy vs. Ukraine and Caucasus) and the rest into karelia. applying pressure on EE vs. Germany is very important because the first 2-4 rounds is a race on the EE/WE front to see if the allies can get a foothold in one or the other. Some people move the AA gun into Ukraine or into novo – it seems to me that there is as much reason to keep them where they are as there is to move them.

Germany #1

Rarely will I buy a blocking sub/transport in the Med with Germany, so my purchase will be either 10 infantry or 9 infantry and 1 tank. Sometimes saving 3 and attacking Finland is worth it, but not many do this and it is difficult to do correctly – I do it maybe 20% of the time that I am axis.

In my opinion, Germany's #1 goal is to stay alive as long as possible. Almost all of the time the axis loses, it's because Germany has fallen (stating the obvious).

To stay alive as long as possible, my Germany has a defensive mindset. If I can stack EE round 1 I will. Versus a top player I would leave it a bit thinner than I would versus a lower player (again minimizing possibility of dice heavy game vs lower players), but either way, I will only stack it if I have better than even odds to keep it if Russia attacks. My attack scenarios are as follows:

OPTION #1 – I love to be able to attack the North Sea, but I will only do that if I have a naval unit left after Russia 1. If this is the case, I will go sub/4 fighters vs.

North Sea, bomber vs. UK transport and 7 units to Sudan. This way, all of my fighters can land in EE if I want and I will try to hold EE for the rest of the game. I don't mind if UK sends its BB vs. my BB, because then it has to buy a carrier and I will keep Africa for an extra turn that way.

OPTION #2 – if Germany has no naval units left I go after the med BB, send 4 fighters to the Med, bomber vs. transport and attack Sudan with 7 units. I used to leave both battleships alone and take 2 infantry and a bomber to Iraq – but I like to see the Axis do that as allies, so I've come to the realization that I won't do it when I am Axis. In this scenario you will have to stack WE with tanks/planes, forfeit EE and drop all your infantry into SE/Germany. I leave either 1 infantry or 3 infantry and an AA in EE, depending on the board setup. I will leave 3 infantry and an AA only if I can afford to attack Russia if he stacks (being able to do this is definitely a luxury, but can cause the Russians some problems). If I can't make that attack, then 1 infantry to EE only.

UK #1

If I can buy 3 transports, I will – anything else will allow the Germans to own Africa for at least one additional round, possibly two. A pristine 2 hit and 4 boats make for a difficult target for Germany with 5 planes, but some players will hit that. If I am worried about a German player hitting my UK navy, then I will also make sure to trade Ukraine AND buy 3 transports with the USA – making a number of targets which he would have to forego to make that hit. Besides, 5 planes vs. 4/1 can go very badly for the Germans. I will always take that risk against a top player when I am allies and even most of the time against lower players.

UK generally has a few options –

I like to hit Sudan or the German fleet if possible. If Germany missed my sub and/or received a hit on its turn I will attack it. The battle will be either a fighter/bomber vs. transport/1 hit BB, or a sub/fighter/bomber vs. transport/2hit BB. Either way I am most likely trading 2 UK air for the med fleet – definitely a good trade for the allies that early. The BB receiving a hit OR missing and allowing the sub to retreat (I will always retreat, even if he misses and I hit) is relatively common. The UK being able to hit Sudan however – is not common. I would hit 4 units or less, if Iraq is still intact. If Germany went after Iraq, then it's a no brainer – UK counters at Iraq to keep Germany from passing the canal on G2.

If there is no action in Africa, then UK sets up vs. Japan in Asia and sometimes for the German fleet kill on round 2. A side note here – there is no place that the UK transport can go that hurts me as Japan – I will touch on this more during my J1 analysis. As much as you might like to have a UK fighter in sink or yakut for defense, that 3rd fighter is VERY valuable in attacking the German fleet – so I prefer to move it to Caucasus with the other two. The bomber can go to novo, or to Caucasus if it was used in attacking Finland and setting the retreat route – this is sometimes nice anyways, because it generally deters the Germans from going to Gibraltar – a huge pain for the allies if the UK AND the USA are not in position to hit that sea zone.

Attacking Finland – If Germany has no boats left, UK can afford to attack Finland – BB/2inf/2fighters is the weakest this battle can be (I prefer to have the bomber also). If the bomber isn't needed in Africa it is a very nice addition to the battle, not only because it helps in the battle, but also because it can set a retreat route for the two fighters. Either through the Baltic, so the planes can go to Karelia, or through Ukraine if Germany still owns it, which allows the planes to make Caucasus. Another side note – it is never worth it to attack a sub that can retreat/submerge to the North Sea and leave bought transports stranded without a capital ship. You are basically giving your opponent a 1 in whatever it is shot at winning the game.

Japan #1

I always purchase 2 transports/3 men – I have tried to go with 3 transports and just can't get it to work as well on a consistent basis. I do stay transport heavy throughout the game though.

Japan has a number of options – if facing the manch/kwang bang – hunker down and play conservative. Sure, it will set the Japanese back as much as three turns, but it is nearly impossible to kill Japan and Germany (the real allied target) will be able to grow very strong.

If not facing a kwang bang, then you have to decide if you want to hit Hawaii light or hard, and whether to attack any Asian territories besides China. For me, the only other territories I would ever hit would be India, SFE or Sinkiang. I think I have never hit Yakut, and I don't like to hit SFE or India if it means bringing a plane – I use 3 planes on the mainland, and will only divert the bomber if I hit Sinkiang. I almost always go light into Hawaii now – it's just another way for me to limit the dice involvement. The way I figure it, I'm basically trading a sub and battleship for a carrier and fighter and a shot at a sub also. I will occasionally go hard into Hawaii because it gains you a sub also, but beware the retreating transport or the bomber in novo – but 4 transports in the Japan Sea are generally a sufficient deterrent from either of these attacks.

Hitting Sink is a good attack if Russia doesn't have a counter and UK went to Africa. I go 2inf, my tank from Kwang (this is why the tank here instead of Africa) and a fighter. That leaves, at the weakest, 5 inf/2fighters in China – which is an acceptable battle even without the bomber – which may be needed in Hawaii.

The UK transport off Australia. I said earlier that there is no place for that transport to go that bothers Japan. Here is what I mean. If it goes to the New Zealand side of Australia I will almost always kill it with my Carolina battleship. That means you have to go light into Hawaii, but that's worth it. If that transport goes to the African side of Australia I will almost always move a carrier with a fighter on it to FIC, thereby covering any movements toward Africa that transport may attempt. This way, the best the allies can do is transport those troops to India next turn – where Japan can counter, unless the allies make certain to get extra troops to India – which sacrifices their operations in a number of other places and allows Japan to get Australia with a lone transport.

USA #1

I hate not being able to buy transports with USA on round 1, but sometimes you have to do just that to avoid the bomber vs. 3 transports attack on Germany #2. If no bomber is in range, then I will buy 2 trans, 5 infantry and 1 tank. If there is a bomber in range I will buy 3 transports if I can get a sub or 4th transport for protection. Sometimes I will even buy 4 transports and an infantry! Otherwise I will buy 12 infantry, 7 bomber/bomber or 2 bomber/2 infantry, depending on the game and whether USA will have to be the strike force vs. the German fleet. I really hate to forego transports on round 1 and think long and hard about the 4 transport purchase simply to have my fleet installed and intact early.

Attacking 2 infantry vs. a lone Japanese in India is something that I will do if I am playing a good player and I'm in position to hold India with UK reinforcements if I win the battle. Otherwise – I retreat those 2 guys to novo – never to Kazak, because you lose more by missing that infantry in Yakut 1 out of 10 games than you gain by attacking Persia (if Japan wants to send a transport over that early, let them).

I will generally attack Finland with 2 infantry/bomber if it has 3 or fewer units, otherwise transport 2 infantry to Finland if it has already been taken. I will almost never counter Japan in Hawaii – without 2 capital ships in the Atlantic, the allies have a tough time moving both navies around (tougher than Japan has with 1 or no cap ships). In other words, it's my opinion that the relative gain just isn't worth it. By round 2 it's much more difficult to address specific strategy issues, but I will do my best to outline strategies for each country going forward from this point.

USSR – it is important for USSR to put as much pressure as possible on Germany for the first 4 rounds. Even if you figure it would be impossible to hit EE, don't put extra units into Russia in order to fight the Japanese. If you back off at all, then it allows Germany to attempt a hold on WE AND EE – which is one of the huge battle lines at the start of the game. If Germany has to trade Ukraine and WE for a portion of the game it's a very efficient way for the allies to bleed units. At the very least this results in a 50 unit German shell later in the game rather than a 70 unit German shell – a very big difference.

Almost all of the time on Russia #2 I will retreat my Yakut wall to novo, consolidate USSR tanks in Russia and put as many infantry in Karelia as I can. About 25% of the time I will buy 3 tanks with Russia, and about 75% of the time all infantry. With a tank buy, it makes it more difficult for Germany to stack EE, but it also makes it more difficult for USSR to stack EE on the next round. This may be a moot point if Germany already is established in EE, but if they have been trading it, a main priority for the allies should be to stack EE.

HOWEVER – if the allies spend too many resources stacking EE in round 2 or 3 (i.e. – send all available UK and USA troops as well as stacking with Russia) – then Germany can remain strong with Africa income even without EE and Japan will be able to expand quickly.

If Germany is stacked in EE – it is important to force them to trade Ukraine – even though they have more planes, this is the beginning of the attrition for Germany that will last the rest of the game. If I can send two fighters, then generally 1 infantry more than is defending is what I will send in. If I can only send 1 fighter, then I will send in 2 extra – Not only does this force Germany to trade more units; it gives you better odds in your battle to begin with.

At some point, USSR will get to send units vs. Japan – and almost always my allies will have Russia going after Japan as much as she is able to. The sooner that the allies can stack WE or EE, the sooner one force can mass to attack Germany, the other two forces can help AND go after Japan. It is simply a question of which side is faster.

From the Axis' point of view, the objective is exactly the opposite (of course). The longer that Germany can hold its borders, the more troops Germany will have when it finally has to make a turtle. Also, the more pressure Germany can project towards Karelia, the fewer units the Allies can afford to send against Japan. Basically the longer that Germany can last and the stronger she is, the longer Japan will be able to roll tech dice. This is, after all, the only way for the axis to win, in my opinion. Some think that the allies should roll for technology once Japan has started rolling or has gotten HB's. For the most part, I disagree. UK or USA is almost always going to be the main strike force against Germany. The other power is VERY valuable in helping to trade German units and battle against Japan. If either guy rolls for tech, then both of those abilities are compromised, AND once tech is achieved, total income is such that technology's usefulness runs a distant second to the strength that Japan wields with the same technology. Put another way, it is definitely possible for the allies to win without rolling any dice at all; even in games where Japan has very good technology. If Japan (or anyone for that matter), hits super cheap tech, it is next to impossible to compete without getting quick tech yourself. That is when it

may be worth rolling, and conceding if u don't hit anything after a few turns (this depends upon the state of the game of course).

Overall Strategy points for each side:

Strategic Bombing:

Early game (up to round 5) strategic bombing runs for every country are almost always a no-no in my opinion. Basically what you are doing here is tempting the dice fates. As a highly rated player, I think the 1/6 time u lose your bomber early will lose you more games than the 5/6 of the time you actually do IPC damage at this stage in the game. That said, there are some very good players that will do runs, even early, with almost any country. I am of the opinion that it is OK to have a bomber sitting around doing nothing for a turn, rather than use the strategic bomb run as a kind of catch-all strategy for when there are no other targets. I'm sure there will be targets in subsequent turns.

Bombing with the Allies:

When Germany is finally boxed in and one of the allies is stacking in order to create a final strike force I will begin to conduct raids versus Germany. I will do this for sure with the non-strike force bombers, and even sometimes with the strike force's country's bomber. My thinking here goes like this: At this point in the game, the number of units that Germany has is super important (as it is all game of course), but at this point, since I'm against rolling tech if I can avoid it, you gain more by taking this risk than you did earlier in the game. You definitely gain more by taking this risk on bombing runs than you would by saving your bomber for the end battle. However, if there are other targets around without AA's it is worth thinking about hitting those – depending upon the state of the game, and what kind of time table you need to be on in order to finish Germany off.

Bombing runs with the Axis:

Some very good players will make bombing runs from either side of the board. I hate to do this with Japan in particular because I will be rolling tech later in the game. With Germany I will do it a bit more often.

The time to bomb with UK or USA is after Germany is boxed and it's simply a race to see who can conquer a capital first. If there are no other targets on the board, go ahead and bomb – you don't gain anything mathematically by saving that bomber for a big battle if it's at least 2 turns away.

Making big attacks

There are a number of informative GOA articles that touch upon this facet of Axis and Allies.

I would like to define (land) battles as being of three types:

1. normal border wars – attrition type battles that maximize the use of your air force.
2. medium size battles – numbering approximately 4-10 units, these are battles that are very key and ones where strategy can really shape the units

available. They are most often seen in Sudan, western Europe, Yakut and Sinkiang.

3. Large battles – these of course, are often of the game ending variety – battles for a capital or for Karelia/EE.

A couple of points regarding what battles to choose, when, and why.

The time to attack Germany:

- a. you have 100% odds, or
- b. If you don't take it that round the game is over.

I can't think of any other reason to attack Germany.

The time to attack Karelia with Germany:

Very rarely does this opportunity present itself. However, there are a couple of instances where it may be a sound strategy.

1. The allies have superior tech and the long game favors the allies.
2. Japan is stacking in novo and can take USSR if UK cannot reinforce from Karelia
3. You have 100% odds and there is no counterattack available (im not sure why I'm putting this in, I don't think this situation has ever happened).

Closing advice

I wrote everything above this a good 6 months ago and never got around to finishing/refining it. I read it all and have decided to leave it as is.

One last point I wanted to make was this: Everything your opponent does should affect what you do. For example:

1. Hit Alaska if USA is transport heavy, but infantry light. Leave Alaska alone if the USA is light transports and heavy infantry.
2. If Japan is transport heavy, be more aggressive trading units in Asia with allies.
3. If Germany sends too many men to Africa, lv it alone and stack WE or EE. If Africa is light, go get it.

I knew I had more examples in mind when I thought about writing this passage, but they seem to elude me right now. In the interest of finally posting this, I'm going to turn it in as is.

Lastly, please keep playing this great game! I love the community, the people, and the hours of fun this game has brought.

Best,
Nick.