

CLASSIC TAG NEWS

A reprint of a popular article from 1992!

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The Conclusion of the January-February Article: “THE RELIEF OF WAKE”

On Wednesday afternoon, December 17, the elements of Task Force 14 rendezvoused about 150 miles west of Pearl Harbor. Admiral Fletcher, clapped in double irons by the plodding Neches, reduced fleet speed to 13 knots.



Admiral William S. Pye

On the 18th at Pearl Harbor, Admiral Pye's staff, with documents salvaged from a downed enemy plane, accurately computed the Japanese strike force's order of battle. Most of it, they figured, was returning to the Home Islands, with perhaps one or two carriers peeling off the main body to support a second invasion of Wake. They were correct, but not certain. Having no hard intelligence, Pye worried that

instead of springing a trap on the Japanese, he might be steaming into an ambush himself.

Wilson Brown felt the same. The Japanese had just moved construction units into the Gilbert Islands, atolls just south of his targets in the Marshalls Mandates. The reports he received from fleet intelligence, however, were quite overdone, estimating perhaps over 100 planes at Makin, and Task Force 11 had to pass within 100 miles of it. Worse yet, the light cruiser Katori, flagship of the Japanese submarine fleet, was reported at Jaluit. It all caused Brown to conclude that he was indeed entering a carefully laid trap.

Good could come of it, however. To Admiral Pye, this supposed threat to the Lexington group wasn't worth any risk. The Marshalls raid was at best a questionable diversion, and he directed Brown to break off, head north, and link up with Fletcher. Simultaneously, Pye ordered Fletcher to fuel his destroyers the next day (crossing the international dateline and losing Sunday), Monday, the 22nd. While it wasn't necessary, the destroyers all had at least three-quarters full bunkers, and further slowed the task force's progress, it did provide a fixed rendezvous.

At 8:00 P.M., Saturday, December 20, Admiral Fletcher, the Saratoga, and Task Force 14 were 635 miles from Wake Island, less than a day and a half's hard steaming. The decision to fuel, and it was Pye's call, proved disastrous to the operation. At sunrise

Monday, the first cans came alongside the Neches. In 1943 they probably could have done it; in 1944 they would have done it; but not in 1941. High seas allowed only half the destroyers to fill. Fletcher should have said the hell with it.

At 2000 he was just over 500 miles from Wake, too far for the Saratoga's Dauntless scout bombers, when reports came of heavy bombing attacks with land and carrier-based planes. Now was the time to cut the task force loose, and with his high-stepping ships steam at 25 knots to a launch position. Fletcher instead plodded on to Tuesday and brought his destroyers up to the Neches at dawn. At 0452 came the report of a bombardment and landing at Wake. At 0800 Task Force 14 was 430 miles away, and had Fletcher so wished, Saratoga could launch her Dauntless at long range.

While Fletcher needlessly milled around, the Japanese invasion force hove off Wake's beaches. The survivors of the original endeavor were now reinforced with Rear Admiral Aritomo Goto's Cruiser Division 6: heavy cruisers Kinugasa, Aoba, Kako, and Furutaka (the division that effected the slaughter at Savo Island, August 9, 1942); destroyers Asanagi and Yunagi; seaplane tender Chitose with twenty-eight aircraft; and just over the horizon, sliced off from the Pearl Harbor Striking Force: Hiryu, Soryu, Tone, Chikuma, and a pair of destroyers. It was definitely the first team, and they hadn't a clue that one, and perhaps two, American carrier task forces stood poised in striking range. At 0753 Task Force 14's radio operators intercepted a call from Wake Island. As Fletcher reported it, "the enemy had landed and that the issue was in doubt;" they were still 430 miles away.



Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher

At Pearl Harbor, Pye conferred for three hours with his senior staff. He was urged to press forward, to outright order Fletcher to advance at high speed. The Lexington and Task Force 11 were quickly closing from the South, and might make it in time to give direct support. Even Halsey and the Enterprise group might be brought into extreme range in a day's time, if for nothing else, to cover the retirement of the other two task forces following the relief of Wake. A retreat without a fight would badly erode fleet morale, which the Marine stand on Wake had done so much to lift.

At first Pye seemed to agree, but his doubts about the whole operation resulted in nothing but a series of conflicting, if not asinine, orders to Fletcher. The first directed Saratoga to steam at her best speed to within 200 miles of Wake and launch a search attack. Had she done so, her planes would have found Hiryu, Soryu, and company sitting fat and dumb on the water, all their attention pointed to the island. But this was almost immediately countermanded by an order to send in the Tangier with a couple of destroyers to evacuate Wake's surviving garrison. Within an hour this lunacy was also cancelled.

At 0920, twenty minutes after receiving news of Wake's surrender, Pye recalled all his forces "with extreme regret." On the flag bridge of the Astoria, several of Fletcher's staff urged him to

disregard the order. Said one of his cruiser commanders: "Frank Jack should have placed the telescope to his blind eye, like Nelson." On the Saratoga, her skipper pleaded with Admiral Fitch to intercede, and allow the carrier and the destroyers with the most fuel to run in and blast anything they found. Things got so bad that Fitch had to leave the bridge lest he be party to a mutiny, especially as he felt that way himself. Marine pilots of VMF-221 sat by their Buffaloes and wept.

At 0700 December 24, Admiral Nimitz, still in civilian clothes, stepped from his Catalina at Ford Island. "What news of the relief of Wake?" were his first words. Cancelled, he was told.

- Ivan Musicant, 1992

CALCULATING SHIP CHARACTERISTICS for MICRONAUTS® : THE GAME - WWII

(Also available on our "Free Stuff" page in the PDF: "Appendix 2 - Producing Ship Status Logs")

Ship Status Logs (SSL) are included for many of the combatants that fought in WWII and a few that "might" have. This section allows the player to construct SSLs for any vessel whose data has been recorded. SSL construction is easily done using Microsoft's Excel spreadsheet program, or if you have another favorite try your hand at it. Any fractions incurred are rounded 1-4 down, 5-9 up, unless otherwise stated. Calculations are required for:

- **Displacement** - hull boxes
- **Speed**
- **Armor protection**
- **Main Armament** - turret size in boxes and hit allocation
- **Secondary Armament** - same as main armament, plus torpedo tubes
- **AA Capability** - calculated from secondary and AA weapon armament
- **ASW Capability** - calculated from ASW capability
- **Aircraft**
- **Motor Torpedo Boats**

Hull Boxes/Displacement: Conway's Fighting Ships is the preferred source for looking up displacements. Micronauts utilizes 1 hull box per 500 tons of standard displacement. Submarines will use their submerged displacement. Put the boxes in 4 vertical rows, with partial rows boxes starting at the top (see example of SSL's in the game). Shade the last row of boxes. Be sure to list in far left rows the alternating MA, SA, for additional damage taken when these rows are lost. Some ships have poor underwater subdivision (PUSD). This needs to be noted on the SSL. This pertains to all merchant ships, warships built upon a merchant ship type hulls, and ships manufactured pre-WWI. Include the letters PUSD next to last right hand column of hull boxes.

Speed: Ship's speed is listed out at full speed on the top left of the hull boxes.

The second row is listed out at 90% of full speed.

The third row is listed out at 75% of full speed.

The fourth row is listed out at 50% of full speed.

Fractions are rounded 1-4 down, 5-9 up.

Armor: Ships armor protection is divided into six levels, ranging from 0 to 5. To compute the armor level, take the armor thickness in inches and convert it to one of the following armor levels:

- 0 = No Armor
- 1 = 1-3"
- 2 = 4-7"
- 3 = 8-11"
- 4 = 12-15"
- 5 = 16"+

Submarines are to be considered armored to level 1, due to their thick steel pressure hulls.

Main Armament: The main armament (MA) boxes are computed in the following manner.

- 11" guns or greater - 4 boxes
- 8-10" guns - 3 boxes
- 6-7" guns - 2 boxes
- 3-5" guns - 1 box

The Royal Navy turret designations are used throughout the game. With the foremost turret labeled "A" and the aft most labeled "Y", with only a few exceptions. Each turret gets a row of boxes. In the far left box, the turret designator is used along with the number of guns in that turret. If the ship is equipped with gun mounts instead of turrets, then the gun mounts are labeled in a similar fashion. If the number of turrets/gun mounts exceeds the number of hull boxes the ship has, then the turrets/gun mounts are grouped together, so that the number of rows of MA boxes does not exceed that of the total number of hull boxes. With one exception, ships with two or less hull boxes can exceed the MA boxes over hull boxes restriction.

The hit allocation numbers are listed to the left of the MA boxes. Since a D20 is rolled to determine the location of the hit to the MA, the turrets/gun mounts are divided as evenly as possible to give an even distribution of hits. To the left of the hit allocation numbers is listed the MA size and number of barrels. Above this is listed the letters "MA", highlighted in the color code of the armor rating of the MA.

If any part of the MA is unable to bear fully for a port or starboard broadside, then below the MA listing indicate how many barrels can bear to a broadside. Also be sure to include the reminder that excess damage is carried over into the hull. (Show example of all the items discussed here)

For CV's, CVL's, CVE's, and AV's, the flight deck of these ships is their MA. Carriers are given 4 rows of boxes, 1 each for the flight decks, fore and aft, and 1 each for their hanger decks, fore and aft. The number of columns are determined by the type of ship. CV's are given 4 columns, CVL's are given 3 columns, and CVE's are given 2 columns of MA boxes. The merchant aircraft carriers (MAC), have only 1 column. AV's usually only have an aft hanger and flight deck. Be sure to put the reminder that if any aircraft are present in a hanger or flight deck position, a fire will occur, and that the damage incurred in the location is doubled.

If the ship is a minelayer, or can be loaded with mines, the number of mines carried by the ship is listed immediately below the last MA box.

Secondary Armaments

Guns: Secondary Armament (SA) is arrived at the following manner.

- 8-10" guns - 3 boxes
- 6-7" guns - 2 boxes
- 3-5" guns - 1 box

All additional armaments (with the exception of light and medium AA guns) of the ship are listed as secondary armament in Micronauts. In the far left box (or in most cases, the only box) is listed the part of the ship these guns are mounted to. "B" for bow, "A" for aft or stern, "P" for port, and, yes you guessed it, "S" for starboard. There are a maximum of 10 boxes for SA guns. If the ship is a BC or larger, and also has torpedoes and/or ASW weapons, it may have additional boxes for these weapons. If the secondary weapons are assumed to be surface engagement weapons If they are dual purpose (DP) or anti-aircraft (AA), they must be labeled as such.

The hit allocation numbers are listed to the left of the SA boxes. Since a D20 is rolled to determine the location of the hit to the SA, the turrets/gun mounts/torpedo tubes/Depth Charges/Hedgehogs/Squids are divided as evenly as possible to give an even distribution of hits. The one exception to this is for torpedo mounts which are semi-concealed, or protected (for example, IJN CA's and the KM Graf Spee). For semi-concealed/protected mounts, use a much lower change of hit (5-10% only).

To the left of the hit allocation numbers is listed the SA size and number of barrels/tubes. Above this is listed the letters "SA", highlighted in the color code of the armor rating of the SA. Usually only some turrets and casement guns were armored.

Torpedoes: Torpedoes are usually clustered into banks or mounts. The mounts are designated by their location the ship. These can be centerline mounted or beam mounted. Centerline mounts are designated by their position on the centerline. C for a centerline mount, CF for centerline Fore, CC for centerline center mount, CA for centerline aft. Beam mounts are indicated by P for port, S for starboard, PF for Port fore, PA for port aft, SF for starboard fore, and SA for starboard aft. After the letter designator of the mount, list the number of tubes in the mount. For example; CF3- centerline fore - triple tube mount. If the ship carries a supply of torpedo

reloads, the number of reloads is listed immediately below the last SA box.

Anti-Aircraft Weapons: Anti-Aircraft (AA) weapons are grouped into 3 range types.

Short Range (SAA) utilizing guns in size from MG to 25mm. 1 point a SAA is gained for every 10 MG's. 1 point is gained from every 6 barrels of 20mm to 30mm guns. Include 1/2 points in your factors.

Medium Range (MAA) utilizes guns ranging in size from 37mm to 65mm, including 2 and 6pdrs. Every 3 barrels of this gun size is granted 1 point of MAA. If ship has only 1 or 2 barrels or if a remainder is left over from dividing by 3, give a 1/2 point.

Long Range (LAA) uses guns from 3" to 5". 1 point of LAA is gained from every 4 barrels in this gun size. For guns in the 3-4.5" size do not use rounding. Guns 4.7-5.5", do use rounding. Make 1 or 2 barrels a 1/2 point of LAA. Round three guns up to the next point. The 3-5" weapons are normally MA on smaller ships and SA on larger ships. If they are AA or DP guns they can be counted in with the LAA.

Anti-Submarine Warfare Weapons: There are 3 major types of anti-submarine warfare (ASW) weapons:

Depth Charges - The standard ASW weapon, pattern/salvo of 16 depth charges is one DC attack. Give one DC attack box per 16 DC carried on board ship.

Hedgehogs - A pattern/salvo of 24 hedgehogs is considered one hedgehog attack. One attack is equivalent to one Hedgehog attack box.

Squids - A spread of three squids is one squid attack. One attack is equivalent to one Squid attack box.

Critical Hit Boxes: There are five different sets of critical hit boxes used on the SSL's in Micronauts. Use the one that best suits your ship.

Standard type for most surface ships:

Critical Hits

BL	EN	EL
RD	ST	BR
FF	AA	AF
FM	AM	SM

For CV's, CVL's, CVE's, and AV's:

Critical Hits

BL	EN	EL
RD	ST	BR
FF	AA	AF
OM	AG	SM

For Submarines:

Critical Hits

BT	EN	EL
RD	ST	BR
	TFC	
FM	AM	SM

For Submarine Transports:

Critical Hits

BT	EN	EL
RD	ST	BR
FH		AH
		SM

For Merchant Ships:

Critical Hits

BL	EN	EL
RD	ST	BR
	No FC	
FH	AH	MG

Aircraft: Micronauts uses one scale aircraft (AC) model to represent 6 actual AC. For Carrier AC divide the AC complement by six, using rounding to obtain the correct number of AC carried on board. For floatplanes/seaplanes use the actual number carried.

This type of AC is generally used singly rather than in formation of attack or defending AC.

To calculate the value of aircraft, use the following formula:

Definitions:

S = Speed FP = Fire power C = Climb rate (ft/min)
M = Maneuverability R = Ruggedness

Speed conversion formula from aircraft's maximum airspeed into game terms: SPD{mph} = Aircraft's maximum speed

$$[([SPD\{mph\} \times .80] \times 1760) / 1000] / 60$$

....or.....

Aircraft maximum speed (mph) multiplied by .8 (eighty percent) multiplied by 1760 (number of yards in a mile) divided by 1000 (yards per inch [game measurement]) divided by 60 (minutes to an hour with each Phase in an Air Impulse equal to one minute).

Attack Factor (AF) for Fighter Type: $([S+FP] / 2) + C + M = AF$

Attack Factor for Single Engine, Non Fighter/Scout and Twin Engine Bomber Aircraft: $([S+FP] / 3) + C + M = AF$

Attack Factor for Bombers, Large Floatplanes, etc.:
 $([S+FP] / 4) + C + M = AF$

Defensive Factor (All Aircraft): $([R+FP] / 2) + C + M = DF$

Weapons/Armament Point Values:

- 303 cal / 7.7 / 8mm = 0.5
- 12.5 / 13mm / .50 cal = 1.0
- 20mm = 1.5
- 30mm = 2.0

(i.e. an aircraft with six .50 cal MGs has a FP value of 6) Powered turrets add 0.5 points for each turret. All weapons are totaled for the final FP factor.

Climb = 0.1 for every 100 ft/min rate of climb. (i.e. a rate of climb of 2700 ft/min equals a point value of 2.7

Ruggedness and Maneuver are each given in a scale from 0 (worst) to 5 (best) in increment values of 0.5.

Motor Torpedo Boats (MTBs): The offensive factors are computed the same as that for AA weapons, with the same factors. However the defensive factors need to be calculated by adding all the factors that apply listed below:

- Speed: 1-20kts = 0 21-30kts = 1 31-40kts = 2 41kts+ = 3
- Size: >40' = 3 41-80' = 2 81-120' = 1 121'+ = 0
- Armor: 2

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Photos not to scale

1/2400th Scale
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