
My ASL Tactical Maxims

Description



This is the first in what may become a series on tactical tips. In order for this to happen a couple of things need to be said right up front. There is ALWAYS more than one way to do things. Some ways are “more right” than others but even “wrong” decisions can work. On top of that, I don’t claim to be the best player in the world. At any given time my player rating is 1700 +/- 100 points according to [ASL Player Ratings](#). This isn’t to say I can’t offer good, sound, tactical advice, but I am acknowledging right up front many others are at least as qualified, some even more so.

At the conclusion of this article, I hope you understand the framework I use to approach a scenario. I will refer back to these maxims in future articles covering tactics. Sometimes I will obey them, sometimes I will bend them, and sometimes I will outright ignore them. Unlike many of my previous articles, this one is based almost entirely on opinion so *caveat emptor*. Let’s get started.

My ASL Maxims

There are few maxims in ASL. I personally have four, but to be completely honest, these are a bastardized form of an old US military mission planning acronym, [METT-T](#). Without further ado, my ASL maxims are :

1. Victory Conditions: our mission, defines success above all else
2. Terrain: the canvas upon which our mission plays out
3. Time: the fixed limits within which we must accomplish our mission
4. Order of Battle: the resources available



Number one drives my decision making. The other three are constraints, focusing my efforts to accomplish number one. Combined together, these things drive my setup and game play. Let's take a look at how these work for me and see if they might work for you.

The Zeroth Maxim

Let's get something straight. Playing to win and playing for fun are not mutually exclusive. "I only play casually." "I only play for fun." Hearing this honestly drives me crazy. You can play to win and still have fun and be a good sport. You can play to win and still be fun to play ASL with. Trying to do your best and working hard to win doesn't take the fun out of the game. Bad behavior takes the fun out of the game, winning or losing.

Victory Conditions

Victory conditions define success or failure. Fulfill them and you win; fail and you lose. Every action and decision you make should be a step towards fulfilling them. They should ever be forefront in your mind. If the Victory Conditions (VC) don't require a unit left at the end, sacrificing everything for victory is a viable option. If the VC doesn't require you to have a tank left at game end, why are you worried about it dying? As long as the tank is destroyed in a way that helps you meet the VC, its destruction is a step in the right direction. The same goes for any other piece of your OB. As long as it's being used to fulfill the VC it is being used properly.

While we are speaking of VC, make sure you understand what it takes to fulfill the VC. It's not enough to know you need to Control building X. You need to know **how** to control it. The same goes for every other type of control condition. Failure to do so makes deliberately fulfilling the VC remarkably more difficult.

I once won a game against Sean Deller and I didn't have a single piece left on the board. As the DEFENDER, my only requirement to win was to deny Sean control of some huts. Having something alive at the end wasn't a requirement. Every leader, every MMC, every bit of my OB was gone or malfunctioned at game end, but I still won. In the end, Sean just couldn't get to where he needed to be to control the huts and that was all that mattered. VC above all else. Every time Sean and I get together, we laugh about this game more than a decade later.

Terrain



It's no accident I placed terrain second on the list. IMO, it is only slightly less important than VC in determining victory. Terrain is the stage on which our play is performed. It determines the pace at which we move across the board. Some piece of it often defines our objective. It limits the room we have to maneuver in. It determines the area we set up in. "Fast-go" terrain we can cover it quickly. "Slow-go" terrain will take more time to cross. "No-go" terrain blocks our movement. This constrains the ways we move across the battlefield and influences our ability to fulfill the VC.

Terrain also limits the ways we can project firepower. Some of it we can take under direct observation, and thus direct fire. Some of it we cannot. Terrain can provide protection, in the form of positive Terrain Effects Modifiers (TEM), to both sides. Terrain can provide concealment, in the form of Hindrances, shielding both sides from fire. Solid defensive terrain with clear fields of fire is tough to overcome.

We must take terrain effects into consideration when planning our attack or defense. Failure to pick solid defensive terrain will inhibit your ability to withstand the attack. Failure to account for movement over the terrain will put you into conflict with the third maxim. Each side needs to be keenly aware of the "high-speed avenue of approach." This is the fastest way to the VC area and an attacking victory. The DEFENDER must deny usage of this approach or make the toll exorbitantly high.

Time

The tyranny of time. Within the scope of an ASL game, time is finite. Even if you're playing a campaign game spread across 20 dates there is a finite amount of time for the ATTACKER to get where he needs to be to win. The clock is ticking. As a DEFENDER, if you can slow his attack early, you put pressure on him to act more rashly at the end to win. I find one of the most difficult things for new players to figure out is the tempo of an attack.

For me, when I first sit down at a board I look at the VC and setup restrictions. I look to see how many hexes I must move forward to reach victory. I divide this by the time available and I have a rough idea of how far I must go each turn. This allows me to know if I am "ahead of schedule" or "behind".

Sadly, it isn't this easy. Counting forward hexes doesn't account for slow-go and no-go terrain. You include these factors when planning. As a DEFENDER you seek to deny the ATTACKER all the fast-go terrain you can. If your opponent is using fast-go terrain, you want it to be as far from the VC as you can make it. Hinge movement obstacles (Wire, AT-



Ditches, Mines, etc) to no-go terrain as much as you can so they can't be easily bypassed. Use terrain and obstacles to funnel the ATTACKER in to kill-zones where you can bog them down and slow their forward progress.

One other thing to keep in mind is verticality. I am not speaking of verticality in the sense of hills but in the sense of Buildings. You can think of every floor you need to clear in a VC building as another turn. Using Upper Level Encirclement combined with Mopping Up should be your watch words but removing enemy units from upper levels is time consuming.

Order of Battle

These are the tools you've been given to achieve your victory. In many ways, by the time you get here, a lot of your thinking should be done. You have already internalized the VC, already looked at the map, and already considered how these will affect the coming match. You have already looked at the timeline and "schedule" the attacker will need to maintain to achieve the VC. Your remaining job is to determine how to effectively use your assets to fulfill your side of the VC.

Some things you should consider at this point:

- Are any of your units required to fulfill the VC? Only Infantry can capture buildings. Only Good Order units can exit for EVP. Do you need a Set DC to destroy a bridge? How are you going to protect that asset and how are you going to safely deliver it to the place you need it to be to win? As the DEFENDER, how are you going to prevent this?
- Does either side have a CVP cap? Your plan needs to account for this possibility. As the ATTACKER, how do you protect your forces? As the DEFENDER, how are you going to push the ATTACKER towards this cap?
- Have you read all the Vehicle and Gun notes?
- Does your OB have some advantage over your opponent's?
- How is your OB going to deal with your opponent's OB? In some cases, it may not be obvious. Perhaps your anti-tank asset will only be useful in Deliberate Immobilization. It could be fanatic Infantry is your only AT asset.

Conclusion

As I said in the intro, this isn't the only way to approach the game but it is MY way. I will refer to this in future articles covering tactics. As always, I hope you find this article



helpful. If you have a different approach please share it in the comments below. Until next time. — jim