

Mechanics Of Bounding First Fire—What Is And What Should Be

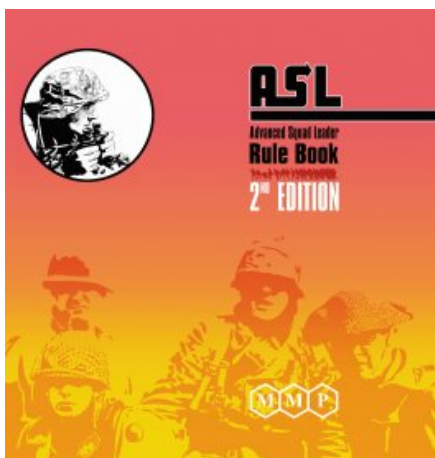
Description



I have written a couple of articles covering [Bounding First Fire](#) (BFF) prior to this one. Those articles focused on the rules. This article will take a different approach. We will explore some of the Q&A pertaining to BFF and what they mean to AFV combat. I will also highlight how I think we should declare BFF, what the rules say, and what the Q&A says relative to all of this.

Unfortunately, this move into one of the more complex and opaque aspects of the rules is going to be as much opinion-based as rules-based. The opinions expressed in the Q&A carry far more weight than anything I put forth, so make sure you are paying attention to who is saying what. Some of this is going to get muddy, so be careful citing this article as proof of anything other than my opinion.

The “Issue”



So there is an issue buried inside of D3.3. In part, D3.3 says “... *The DEFENDER can intervene to attempt Defensive First Fire after the ATTACKER announces expenditure of any MP (even Delay MP), but must do so before the announcement of the next MP*



expenditure or of Bounding First Fire; ..." The gist of this rule is that once an ATTACKER has declared a BFF shot, the DEFENDER must await the outcome of that attack before he can act again.

Taken on its own, this doesn't seem to be an issue. The confounding subject comes when we announce BFF simultaneously with a change to CE status. Both actions require zero MP and are tied to the previous movement expenditure. It is not unreasonable for the DEFENDER to want to shoot at the now vulnerable crew which could not be affected prior to the announcement of CE. But once we announce B1F, we must complete B1F before the DEFENDER can fire. So what happens when a player says "Stop, go CE and B1F"?

The First Q&A

Refer to footnote one. The relevant part for this discussion pertains to an announcement of "Stop, Go CE and BFF". As submitted, the Q&A points out D3.3 prevents any Defensive First Fire (D1F). The Q&A however, says this is incorrect. It states *"Bounding First Fire cannot be declared simultaneously with a MP expenditure, so the DEFENDER will always be able to declare Defensive First Fire between an MP expenditure and the declaration of Bounding First Fire."*

What is clear here is we must afford the DEFENDER an opportunity to fire on the Stop MP. This answer over ruled an earlier Q&A. Then there is a third Q&A which has a slightly different take. This Q&A afforded the DEFENDER a shot. After no declared shots, the moving vehicle declares CE and BFF. Part 2 say you cannot declare a D1F shot after declaration of a B1F shot against the CE vehicle.

But wait. The same Q&A (part 1) also says you can take a shot against a vehicle declaring CE based on the previous MP expenditure. Part one sets up a race condition with part 2. If the DEFENDER can announce his intention to D1F before the ATTACKER announces his intention to BFF, then the DEFENDER keeps his right to fire. Clever players might head that off at the pass and say "I have no fire unless you CE" to void the race.

Zero MP Issues

You cleverly stated you have no shots unless your opponent declares CE, but what if he states "I will BFF and CE"? There is nothing in the rules stating the order of operations. Since they are zero MP expenditures, we tie them to the previous MP expenditure. As far as I can tell, they happen simultaneously.



There is an old Q&A stating we must announce CE prior to the BFF shot, but the status of that Q&A is murky. Interestingly, this is the only **OFFICIAL** Q&A cited in this article. It appeared in an official [Avalon Hill publication](#). Sadly, that doesn't clear up its authority. The *Article First Do No Harm* in [Journal 3](#) deprecated older Q&A. In order to avoid answering all the same questions again, these older Q&A were "brought back to life". The best we can do is look at the older Q&A, compare them to modern Q&A and the rules. If there is superseding Q&A or if the rule itself has changed, we should ignore these older Q&A. If neither has occurred, we can look at these older Q&A as diagnostic. Regardless, we need to look at these older Q&A with a jaundiced eye.

That is a lot of words to say the issue isn't at all clear. The best we can say is it seems we must announce CE before BFF. But if pressed, it would be difficult to point to a definitive answer. Even if this proves to be true, all we have done is resolve back to the previous race condition.

A Sideways Discussion

The funny thing about changing CE status is it isn't really tied to MP. You can do it practically at any point. It is this lack of specificity that allows us to claim a shot on the previous MP expenditure. But it also allows for other interesting options. It is possible to declare CE simultaneously with a Smoke Dispenser or Vehicular Smoke Grenade attempt. Since you can declare CE without spending a MP, this means you can do this at the beginning of a vehicle's movement BEFORE spending a MP and being subject to fire. If you fail the SMOKE attempt, the vehicle remains CE since you cannot voluntarily switch between CE and BU status more than once in a MPh.

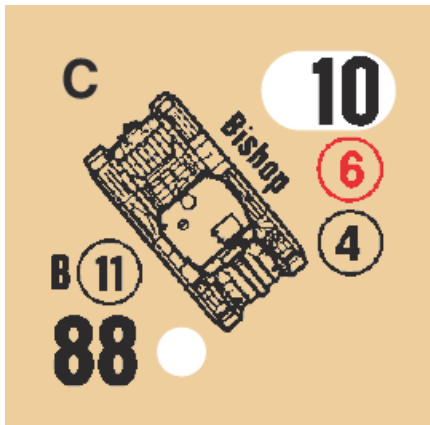
What isn't clear is what happens if you declare a CE plus Smoke attempt in the Movement Phase after spending one or more MP. Is the CE part of the attempt to place Smoke or is it part of the previous MP? If you cannot place Smoke, then your CE crew is vulnerable on its last MP expenditure. Can we shoot the exposed crew before it places SMOKE? I don't know. I can see this playing either way since the zero MP CE exists.

How I Play It

When I play ASL, I will clearly state the MP expenditure and give my opponent a chance to fire. After he finishes firing I will change the status of my vehicle to CE and give him another chance to shoot. Once he finishes shooting, I will perform my action. This may be

B1F, Smoke Dispenser, Vehicular Smoke Grenade, etc. I deliberately give my opponent a chance to shoot when my vehicle changes status. I don't like race conditions and I think this is fair. But this is only my opinion formed over many years playing ASL. Don't ask me to point to a rule or Q&A supporting this position. I can't unless I am playing in the Albany Tournament where they have a tournament rule clarifying this approach.

Conclusion



Foremost, I don't envy the game's caretakers. The rules are hard enough to keep track of without also having 300+ pages of Q&A to be aware of. Multiple collections of official and unofficial Q&A make the task even harder. The need to both deprecate and not re-answer all the same questions only makes it more confusing. It is hard for a small group of people to keep track of it all. I do not mean this article as an indictment of those people. They do an outstanding job.

There is no doubt this is hard for us players to get right. The lack of specificity in the rules and the confusion in the Q&A makes understanding that more difficult. It could really use clarification keeping in mind we have somehow muddled all this way without it. After all, the game is more than 30 years old.



Finally, please keep in mind that all of this is mostly opinion and mine counts for very little. As one player pointed out at a recent tournament, “Jim is just a guy with a blog. That doesn’t make him infallible.” Unfortunately, there is no straight answer here so opinion is all I have. The rules are unclear and the Q&A are outdated, contradictory, or internally inconsistent. I think the most definitive answers are in footnotes one, three, and four. Given the race conditions in footnote 3, I don’t find that very satisfying. I am not alone. The CE + BFF / BFF + CE issue is anybody’s guess, but at least footnote four gives us a sign of prior intent.

Sorry. I wish I could make this clearer. But I really am just a guy with a blog.