

Rubble Town Modern – Onside

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Rubble Town Modern is an updated version of the WW2 game I showed last year at COW (see Nugget for its on-side). It is a card-based solo game where you are a platoon commander assembling your force and then having to assault your way up a randomly generated street against a randomly generated opposition. With the Modern version Shermans have been replaced by Challengers, Warriors and Boxers, 6 pdrs replaced by NLAW, Matador and Javelin, and there are radio IEDs to contend with as well as UAVs to deploy. The key decision mechanic for each engagement is do you want to use smaller calibre weapons which will minimise rubble, but may not be enough to take out a well-protected enemy, or do you want to add in some of your large calibre weapons in order to help ensure that the enemy is taken out – but at the risk of generating so much rubble your tanks can no longer get down the street to support you. There is more information on the game and fuller design notes at <http://www.taunoyen.com/games/rubbletown>.

Having two sets of the game with me, for COW2024 I was able to run a head-to-head game (where each team plays separately but then compares scores/experiences), followed by a third game – I think we finished about 0015 on Saturday morning. Tom and Julian hit trouble from almost turn 1 and were up against some heavyweight defenders with rubble piling up and very slow progress, with their troops continually suppressed and their Challenger an early casualty. In contrast Graham and Richard seemed to make short work of the street, with some excellent use of smoke and taking most of the positions by assault. I think that Evan and Chris's game was somewhere in between, but it was getting late by then!

We had a good wash-up after each game, and as this (and my other games at this COW) was part of my PhD I used COW2024 as an opportunity to try out my formal, ethically approved, data collection and analysis – so thanks to everyone who signed the consent forms, filled out my survey and consented to having the AAR recorded (which I'm already starting to analyse and is making this next part of the on-side a lot easier to write!).

Generally, everybody seemed to really enjoy the game, liked its simplicity and also that you really felt that you were making the sort of decisions that the platoon commander on the ground would be making. It was certainly interesting to see the different capability and tactical choices that the teams made, and how they played out on the street. There were a few minor points about improving the clarity of some rules, and tweaking the cards all of which I will incorporate in the next iteration. Whilst on the one

hand there were calls not to add too much extra chrome and destroy its simplicity there was discussion about having the ability to call in reinforcements if you got stuck (but at a penalty and also with no guarantee of success), about having Rules of Engagement with some cards having Protected Sites, and also to have the ability to turn off the main route and to try and get round the enemy on another street. The former I can see going in as optional rules and the latter would make a nice expansion pack. There was also some interesting discussion about how the rules might actually encouraged you to create rubble as it could then improve your defences on the next tile once you've cleared the enemy away.

All-in-all I was very happy with how the session went, I think everyone had fun. The next step is to get Rubble Town formerly released as print'n'play, so more people can play it and more people can give me feedback to help build the PhD!

Thanks to everyone who took part.