



Setup and Strategy in Hube's Pocket, Part 2

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[Editor's note: This is part two of Tony's extensive and detailed look at HP. Part 1 appeared in Operations 41.]

The Conduct of the Battle: Zhukov and Vatutin

Many Russian players make one huge mistake: they try to fight like Germans. Don't. Your army is much better than it was in 1941 or 1942, but you are still not their equal in a fast-moving mobile battle. In particular, move-mode overruns with your armored forces are *not*, repeat *not*, your path to victory.

The Tools

Your primary combat arm is the infantry. Count the number of 14-4-3 divisions you have. Yes, you really do have that many of them. Paired with your weaker divisions, they serve as a force multiplier, as a 14-4-3 and 12-2-2 attacking together are almost identical in effect to two 14-4-3s attacking together. Infantry is the force to dig Germans out of cities, to hit them in the forests, and above all to break their lines should they dare to stand and fight you in the open. It can also overrun across minor rivers.

A word about overruns. Usually, you should avoid them like the plague; the Germans have superior action ratings. However, high-odds overruns can be very useful against lone units. Or you may want to drive the Germans out of a particular hex, accepting some losses now to make your combat-phase attacks more destructive. Or you may want to get in several attacks on a fortress city in a single turn. Don't use overruns automatically like the Germans do, but do use them when appropriate. Your 5 AR tank battalions are very useful here.

Keep in mind that infantry doesn't have to all be in the front line. A second wave of infantry in reserve can be extremely useful when assaulting a strong German line, or attacking a fortified city. A second wave hitting already-DGED troops spares you the effort (and supply cost!) of DGING them again.

Russian armor has three main functions. First, it supports the infantry. Armor stacked with infantry in the open helps protect against panzers. More importantly, it attacks with them. Armor attacking targets in the open can be extremely supply-efficient: a 6-3-6 mech brigade provides 9-12 points of offensive strength for 1T, more than the 6-7 you get from an infantry division (6 from a 12-2-2 or 12-4-3, 7 for a 14-4-3 down a step, if you're not using proportional losses) or the 4-6 you get from move mode tanks, though of course you have to fuel it too. An entire tank division in combat mode in the front lines can generate an amazing amount of force against German mech units in the open; stacked with an AR 5 Guards tank battalion or an AR 4 infantry division in move mode, it can even pull off high-odds overruns. This can be devastating against DGED units during the Exploit Phase, for instance.

Armor's second function is positional. Sometimes it doesn't matter what you have in a hex, only that you have something there. Denying German use of rail lines, spotting for an artillery barrage or air attack, preventing supply throw and draw, setting up blocking positions on the flanks or in the rear of units

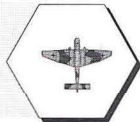
you're about to attack ("ZOC-blocking," which forces them to lose units if they retreat DGED), having anti-tank protection in an open hex, overrunning isolated artillery, shutting down airfields, holding a bridge or river line to prevent panzers rushing across it—armor does all of this, and more, just by being where you need it. Of course, armor deployed like this outside of infantry support is very vulnerable to German counter-attacks. This is not necessarily a bad thing, since it might be better for you if the Germans spend 2 SP to send a panzer division to take out one tank battalion in the woods in their rear, rather than 6 SP for that same panzer division to wipe out two infantry divisions and two armor units stacked with them in your front lines (and, yes, a panzer division can do just that!). I like to use the 4-3-6 tank battalions for this purpose; they're very fast and can go a long way in move mode. In particular, look for opportunities to get around the flanks of a German line, either to spot for air barrages on his reserves before they can move, or to ZOC-block during the Exploit Phase.

The final function of armor is deep exploitation. This is not mere raids into the rear (that's done by lone tank battalions and is mainly positional in nature), but operations intended to smash German resistance by surrounding chunks of their army, destroying reserves, and seizing key hexes (VP cities, rail junctions) in their rear in sufficient strength to hold them. Usually the big AR 4 Guards mech corps are the ones tapped for this job, but the AR 3 units can have a role to play as well. Combat-mode armor can stack with move-mode infantry to quickly form a powerful line many hexes long; move-mode armor can swing wide and pocket large chunks of an enemy formation.

You will have to be patient and prepare properly for this mission: unsupported units sent deep near German reserves are not likely to come back. Worse, the German reserves may frustrate the mission of your armor (say, by breaking open a pocket before the Supply Phase, or recapturing a city before you have time to flip into Combat Mode). Therefore you must deal with them before driving into the German rear. There are several ways to do this. DG them with air power. Shell them the turn before your main attack. Draw them into the front line by attacking it so ferociously it must be reinforced. Break through the front line, surround them, shell them, and attack them. Interdict the roads they must travel to reach the front. Attack with so much armor the Germans can't destroy it all. Be creative.

Your motorized infantry regiments are ideal for deep drives against cities (since they are at full strength if attacking, and usually have better ARs than the German fortress brigades and alert battalions); preserve them for this time, and rebuild them quickly if they are destroyed. Tanks are better for combat in the open and cutting rail lines; mech has some of the strengths of both. Try to use your mech units against German tanks (they're x1.5, just like your tanks), and your tanks against German mech units (where they'll be x2 on the attack in the open). Of course, the Germans can counter this by deploying tanks everywhere—but single tank battalions in each hex are not concentrated into powerful formations wrecking your lines.

Artillery... ah, artillery. Mighty barrages disrupting huge



stretches of the enemy line. Guns parked wheel-to-wheel for miles. Shelling your way to victory...

Dream on. Artillery takes too much supply to use indiscriminately. You have more artillery than you will ever be able to afford to fire. The Red Air Force is much cheaper, much more flexible, and much longer-ranged. Use Sturmoviks whenever you can.

Unfortunately, weather and enemy fighters may stop them, and you don't have enough planes to cover the entire front. Artillery works even when planes don't fly, or in areas where enemy fighters control the air. Also, artillery hits harder than the Red Air Force can: even without the Katyushas, two brigades together generate a 5T barrage that should hit most targets. And artillery isn't affected by flak; it can still fire even if DGed by enemy barrages in the Reaction Phase.

You need to use artillery carefully. Use it on hexes that you must attack, or on worthwhile targets like enemy panzer divisions. Use it surgically, to support breakthroughs, rather than indiscriminately all along the front.

A note, by the way, on the theory of DGing. It is almost always better to DG enemy units during your turn. Defensive artillery fire is, more often than not, a waste of supply in **Hube's Pocket**. The enemy may not be planning to attack where you think he is. He may have enough units that even if you DG some, his others will be able to carry out the mission. You may miss.

A stack you DG during your reaction phase may not be able to attack that turn (though it might anyway), and the DG will be removed before you can do anything about it; the stack will still be there next turn. (Step losses from artillery should never be counted on, and are an inefficient way to kill steps anyway. If you get one, chalk it up to good luck. Don't plan on it.) But if you DG an enemy stack during your turn, you may be able to destroy it entirely later in the turn, and it will never come back. Even if you don't, it will be DGed during the next turn as well, meaning that the enemy will not be able to attack effectively with it. Nor, and this is very important, will he be able to put it into reserve mode. A panzer division shelled or bombed during your turn will be vulnerable that turn, and not able to attack effectively or react to your actions next turn either. (A minor bonus for a double-turn: when you go second and DG enemy stacks, any survivors will still be DGed if you move first next turn, so you don't need to spend supply or air power to wreck them again.)

You can afford to risk artillery. You start with staggering amounts of it (five divisions, with two more as reinforcements), and losing a brigade here or there in a dangerous operation doesn't matter much. Move mode artillery can travel a fair distance into the enemy rear, and perhaps reach reserves he had thought out of immediate danger. In general, you will want one artillery division for each sector of the front, tasked for defense and combat-phase barrages, with an extra division, tasked to support exploitation, in the sector where you are making your major effort.

A quick note on air power: the Sturmoviks are so short-

ranged it's unlikely they'll be able to go after many of the German air bases. Don't worry about that: the longer-ranged bombers, and your fighters, are capable of handling the Luftwaffe. Save the Sturmoviks for ground support.

You will have to think about your 9-point bombers: do you team them with two Sturmoviks to hit on the 25-40 column of the barrage table (instead of the 17-24), or do you fly them off-map to pick up supplies (2T each, 1 SP/turn).

You want to keep as much of your air power on as few bases as possible—four level 3 air bases let you fight your entire air war on 1 SP/turn, while the Germans are spending at least that much for far fewer planes, if you can force them to disperse.

The Techniques

A number of things to remember when carrying out attacks and planning them. These are lower-level concerns than your operational direction of the battle, but nevertheless serve to make it much more effective.

They call it "Combat Mode" for a reason. Attack in combat mode whenever possible. You get twice the punch per supply token expended. Also, staying in combat mode means any German counterattacks are less effective. Don't advance in move mode unless you're sure that the Germans can't counter-attack effectively: the technical term for infantry caught on the march by panzer divisions is "track grease."

Pocket. Pocket. Pocket. Attacking is supply-expensive. And chancy. Make the other guy do it at bad odds. The way to do this is to create pockets whenever possible. Don't try to slam the whole enemy line hard: look for places where you can drive a narrow gap and rush exploiting units through to surround the German line. Then attack the pocket—but only enough to

force the defenders inside to burn supply, and perhaps retreat onto and DG each other; it will then be harder for them to get out. Watch out for enemy reserves in the area—but if you can deal with them, and completely surround chunks of the line, he will have to try to break out before the Supply Phase. That means overruns, and doing low-odds

overruns with one- or two-step stacks is a great way to cause attacker casualties.

Ideally, you want your pockets (especially big ones like the ring you throw around Korsun and the Dnepr hexes) to be double rings: an inner and outer envelopment. This will make it very difficult for the troops inside to overrun out, and anyone attacking from the outside will have to carry out two overruns to break in, leaving them with not enough movement to get away from your counterattack. Ideally, you want to form a pocket when going second, so if you go first next turn you can flip any Move-Mode envelopers to combat mode and have your tanks go crush any reserves that might be able to intervene. Ideal situations do not always arise, but try your best to arrange them.

Use movement, not firepower, whenever possible. This is particularly true of strong defensive positions. Why attack troops dug-in in the woods across a river when you can get

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them out of the position by threatening to go around? Why attack a city immediately when you can surround it and wait for it to start starving? Keep an HQ in reserve in each sector, where it can race up to rivers during your reaction phase and flip next turn to form a bridge at an unexpected spot. Instead of throwing an extra tank battalion into the battle, move it around the flank of the line to ZOC-block retreating enemy forces and increase casualties without expending supply. Many other applications of this principle exist.

Avoid cities. Yes, I know, it's glorious to present the key of each newly liberated city to Comrade Stalin, and eventually you will need to free your worker comrades and clear your supply lines. But in the meantime, each of those cities is a marvelous fortress for the Wehrmacht, horribly expensive to attack. Don't. Drive around the cities. Attack troops near cities to force the Germans to expend supply dumps inside. Keep driving past them. You shouldn't besiege a city unless you're able to simultaneously attack beyond it: this will keep any would-be relief forces busy.

If you must attack a fortified city, make sure to DG its defenders. Try to arrange multiple attacks in the same turn (stacks of infantry in reserve, moving next to the city, can overrun DGED targets in the exploit phase, and then attack; you don't want to use armor in urban areas if you can avoid it.) Also, don't pile on the troops hoping for a big victory. You're unlikely to get it, and huge attacks eat huge amounts of supply. Try to arrange small attacks that result in Ao1 Do1 results. You'll spend less supply for each step you kill. (A 14-4-3 and 12-2-2 attacking together can often cause just such a result.) Your goal here is to burn up the supply dumps inside the city—once out-of-supply markers appear, and the Germans have started to lose steps to attrition, then attack in force.

The joys of consolidation. If you have two shattered tank or mech corps, merge them into one. It saves fuel. Try and keep your biggest corps (like 7th Mech and 20th Tanks) up to strength, at the expense of the smaller ones (or the independent tank brigades). You may wish to consolidate infantry divisions as well, once they start taking hits.

Maskirovka. Take full advantage of the rules here—the historical Soviet commanders spent a lot of time and effort on camouflage, radio discipline and deceptions, and the like. Do the same. Hide a tank corps counter under an infantry regiment, but leave one battalion in the open... fifteen hexes away (as long as you're drawing from the same HQ or railhead). Play shell games with how full your infantry divisions are (are those four divisions all 2 steps down? or are they full strength with a 1T counter under them?) Stack 10 1T supply counters under a decoy offensive, and a 10SP counter near the real one. Put reserve forces in the open in one area, and hide them under non-reserve infantry regiments (or even artillery brigades, if you know the enemy can't get adjacent to expose the deception before you're ready to use it) elsewhere. Be sneaky, and vary tricks so your opponent doesn't catch on.

Plan at least one operation ahead. Don't get so caught up in how well you're attacking on this front that you lose the big

picture. Ask yourself, for each attack, "How will hurting the enemy here advance my operational goals?" If it doesn't affect the success of the next step of your plan, save the supply for something that will.

Press forward. Don't just sit in one place, even if you aren't attacking. Keep moving forward, looking for better positions to attack the enemy, better jumping-off spots for a new offensive. Your infantry and artillery can move forward on their own, and the supply to move some tanks along with them for defense in the open isn't that much (your other tanks can catch up when the offensive gets underway.) Try to maintain contact with the Germans all along the offensive front. If anything opens up, you will be ready to take advantage of it, and meanwhile, with your units adjacent, his will not be able to go into reserve or use strategic movement mode to disengage.

It can be dangerous to be adjacent to German units—they can hip shoot and overrun with no warning, or attack in the combat phase without any preparation and while your reserves are elsewhere—but it's dangerous for them, too, and you want to keep the Germans confused about where you're planning to attack. A purely defensive deployment would stay several hexes back from the Germans, so they would be forced to expose themselves when attacking—but if the Germans know you're purely defensive in one area, they may pull forces from it to reinforce another. Decide what risks you're willing to run, but on the whole no general will do very wrong who places his force in position to wreak havoc on the enemy.

Keep your planes covering each other, and the field of action. Build air bases in threes, within 10 hexes of each other, but not so close that a single raiding tank battalion can shut down multiple airfields, or a single interdicting plane reduce the refit rate on more than one. Your air bases protect each other, and the Germans have to use most of their fighter force to clear off your fighters if they want to raid freely in an area. You also want your air bases to provide cover over your front lines (and, ideally, over where the front lines will be a few turns from now, so you're not always building more airfields.)

Send out planes on interdiction. You want to entice the Germans into sending fighters off air bases so you can dash in and knock his remaining planes down, and then smear them on the ground. Be careful here; you may want your bombers to hit the enemy lines instead. Consider carefully how your air power can best support the battle.

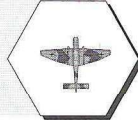
The Conduct of the Battle: Manstein

You are considerably outnumbered by an army almost as good as yours (and in some respects better), and you are handicapped by a madman's decision to stand and fight when retreat is indicated.

The solution can be summed up in two words: attack relentlessly.

Certainly this is risky, but if you take no chances, the

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Russian bear will lumber up to you and start hugging. Ursus sovieticus is very strong.

Understand that this will be a long-drawn-out fight. More correctly, you must make it a long-drawn-out fight. A rapid blitzkrieg that the Russian player shapes as he desires will inevitably hammer you into paste against the anvil of the cities you must hold long enough to satisfy your boss. You must not merely attack, but attack in such a way that the Russian is forced to divert from his planned offensive to deal with you.

This is not easy. Driving deep, for instance, is hard to pull off against competent Russian direction; the rear guards will hold their position and the counterattacks will cut you off and chew you up. There are some opportunities you should watch out for, nevertheless.

One of them lies to the south. The entire Second Ukrainian Front depends on one road and one railroad for trace supply. If he's smart, he'll also set up a wagon extender to use the Cherkassy bridge to reach the railroads near Kiev. If, and only if, you can seize all three locations at once, the Soviet southern wing will be eating off the map, and there are a lot of them to feed. Unfortunately, to pull this off, you will need to take three well-defended locations and hold all three against ferocious and desperate counterattacks. Unlikely, to say the least, but if you can threaten it (or least bluff that you're about to threaten it), you may be able to slow the Bear by forcing him to watch his tail.

The second opportunity lies in the north. If you can break through to Zhitomir and Fastov, you may be able to similarly isolate the northern wing. This is more difficult, since there's a lot of open terrain leading back to Kiev, and it will be hard to block all available routes for a Soviet truck extender to keep their northern wing in supply. It's still worth threatening, since every Russian unit you keep guarding the rear is one not available to attack you.

Finally, there are a number of roads that lead to Kiev. If the Russians don't watch them very, very carefully, you might be able to re-take the city early in the game, in which case Stalin will transfer your opponent to a penal battalion in the Finnish swamps.

Deep operations, though, are unlikely to be your salvation, barring major failures in Soviet direction and deployment. The Russian army of 1944 is vastly more capable than the 1941 or 1942 models, and more likely to be aware of the need for defense in depth. Look for smaller gains instead.

Operationally, you must try to dislocate the Soviet offensive by forcing them either to burn offensive supply on defense, or to conduct operations in areas they had not planned to conduct and are not well-prepared for. Of course, much of the time you will be dancing to the Soviet tune, and not vice versa. They, after all, have the strategic initiative and the larger forces, and frequently you will be rushing troops hither and yon to shore up weak points or seal off penetrations, or hastily pulling back to avoid being crushed, or trying desperately just to hold onto a few vital hexes a turn or two longer. But you want to keep looking for spoiling opportunities. In particular, you must find a way to attack up north near Zhitomir and Berdichev

early in the game. This is the only zone where you are even close to having force superiority over the Russians, and since the Russians are probably attacking down south, if you attack strongly in the north you will force him to divert his attention and supply flow from the south, which may give you some extra time to restore the situation down there. Most of the area north of the Bug and east of Lyubar is strategically meaningless: nothing suits you better than making the Russians expend supply attacking to conquer wasteland, rather than attacking to gain VP cities and vital terrain down south. Of course you have to do it without sticking your neck out far enough to invite the Russians to hack it off. A tough order.

Tactically, you need to keep two things in mind.

First, conduct spoiling attacks. If the Russians are building up for an offensive, you may be able to catch them off-guard by attacking first. Watch for chances to counterattack into the middle of a developing Soviet offensive and hit units advancing in move mode, or ones that have advanced behind your lines. (Hey, if they're behind your lines, then your units are between them and safety! Isn't it nice of the T-34s to voluntarily ZOC-block themselves?) While it can be very fun to DG Russian reserves during your reaction phase, read the advice to the Russians on why DGing during their own turn is better—it is even truer for you! Russians you DG in reaction will remove the DG, and attack next turn. Russians you DG in your turn, and kill, will never bother you again.

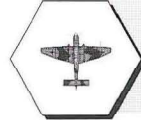
This brings us to your second goal. You want to kill Russians. Many Russians. Any Russians. While you may claim otherwise in your memoirs, they do not have a limitless supply of manpower. Every 12-2-2 division you kill is a rear-area guard or a line extender that he will have to replace with a 13-3-3. Every regiment you kill is a regiment the Russians will not be able to use for besieging cities, or blocking ZOCs, or guarding airfields, or any number of other functions that would hamper you without costing them supply.

And every attack you make you make costs him supply. It adds up, especially if you can goad him into firing his artillery defensively. The Russian only gets 15 1/3 SP a turn, on average. If he spends 3 a turn on defense, after five turns he will have only attacked with four turns' worth of supply. In effect, you have forced him to spend an entire turn doing nothing.

If the Russian fears you might attack anywhere and everywhere, he will be more cautious. He will be less likely to race forward, more likely to make sure that his infantry is always accompanied by armor or anti-tank guns, that his reserve armor is well back from the front line, that his front lines are solid and not vulnerable to penetration, that his dumps are well-stocked all along the line in case units get cut off, that his reserve markers are used for defensive artillery instead of offensive infantry and armor: all of this will further slow his forward progress, which is exactly what you want.

Panzer fear exists. Generate it. Make it happen. It will slow the Red Army more effectively than your meager defensive lines will.

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Finally, steady destruction of infantry mounts up, and eventually the Russians will start running short of troops. (It will take a lot of time, but at one point in the one game I have won so far as the German player, my opponent Scott resorted to attacking cities well behind his lines with move-mode tank overruns because he did not have enough infantry to mount multiple attacks.)

As to the actual conduct of attacks, remember that you are in this to kill troops and force the Russians to burn supply. You are not fighting for terrain (well, except the bare minimum to satisfy your insane Leader): you are fighting to kill the Russian Army. Since you are outnumbered, you need to make sure that your attacks are lethal. Attack where the terrain is favorable. Make sure to DG your targets before attacking. (The Luftwaffe is vital in this effort: bombing raids are cheaper than artillery.) Then make sure to force your opponents to retreat through ZOCs and take an additional step loss. You may not want to surround the victims entirely. Remember that you want them to pay supply from dumps (which other units could use), not internals (which won't matter anyway after you've killed them).

Your panzers will be the primary tool, because of their mobility and high action ratings. But remember that any time the Russians are next to you, you are next to them: the stereotypical German move-mode armored overrun preceded by hip shoots is not the only tool in your bag. Front-line infantry and armor in combat mode can inflict a lot of damage. Even better, you can support them with artillery instead of the Luftwaffe (useful on cloudy days, and in sectors dominated by Russian fighters), and you may not even have to fuel them. Any Russian troops next to your troops are potentially vulnerable.

And if you are thinking about evacuating your units... look at the situation and think again. It costs as much supply to attack adjacent units with a panzer battalion as it costs to move it. Never move armored units except to attack, or if you absolutely must retreat right now to the next good defensive line. There are very few situations so bad a good counterattack will not postpone the problem for a turn.

Several Techniques to Keep in Mind

Deal with Russian penetrations immediately. Any time the Russians make a bulge or hole in your line, patch it, preferably by destroying the hole-makers. Otherwise, you are asking to be enveloped, as their mobile forces—and infantry!—force a breach and pour through the hole. Note that driving back the Russians is preferable to merely moving more forces in to maintain the line: the Russians can play that game longer than you can.

Overrun only worthwhile targets. A good rule of thumb is to assume that on any turn you use a panzer division in a multiple-overrun assault, you'll lose one unit from it. (You will usually have to take option results as losses so you can keep moving—if you don't, you'll end up too close to the front lines and then the Russian counterattack will destroy you.) Don't overrun things that aren't worth a lost unit. In particular, it's

usually not worth it to overrun single units sitting in non-open terrain. Unless they're doing something obnoxious like blocking a supply line, cut them off from resupply and let them starve instead. Likewise, you would prefer to overrun at 5:1 +2 if it all possible; lower-odds overruns are too likely to result in a loss. 4:1 or 5:1 +3 is even better.

Hit the low-quality troops first. The Russians will burn up enough of their 4 AR infantry leading attacks, and you're only +2 overrunning them after you DG them. Better to hit the 3 AR units and attack at +3 after they're DGed—and 12-2-2 divisions alone in the front line should be obliterated on sight. Attacking any full Russian division costs him 2T in defensive supply: you might as well attack the ones that are easiest to kill.

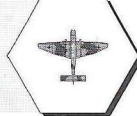
Keep reserves handy; keep a solid line. The two go hand in glove: reserves are fairly useless if not protected from enemy air attack and perhaps overruns by enemy armor. The line protects the reserves; the reserves deal with threats to the line. If you don't have enough troops to form a line and reserves, it's probably time to pull back to the next line. The Russians will usually spend a turn or two catching up with you, which gives you time to form a new line and maybe move reinforcements to the threatened sector.

Pair off your panzer divisions. A single panzer division can carry out two attacks, assuming it follows the usual plan (stay 3-4 hexes behind the line so it won't get shelled; move forward and attack; move back behind the line to avoid getting crushed in the next enemy turn). This is not enough to seriously dent an incoming Soviet offensive. You would really like to have at least two divisions in reserve behind each sector, so they can team up and deliver a crushing blow. This opens up several possibilities, such as using one division to break open a small gap that lets the other one hit ZOC-blocked enemy positions (you want to make sure as many defender option results as possible are losses, not retreats.) Another possibility is to use one division in combat mode to attack, and a second in move mode to finish off the stragglers. Of course, the Soviets will be doing their best to keep you from having adequate reserves.

Know the difference between defensive and offensive reserves. Defensive reserves are either artillery, to shell attacking Russian units (usually a waste of supply, except perhaps in chokepoint situations like the river gap north of Kirovograd where only a few stacks can attack at all), or units in combat mode, which move in to reinforce stacks DGed by bombing or to form a second line behind an area where you think a hole is going to open up. Offensive reserves are the move-mode stacks intended to go out during the exploit phase and annihilate enemy stacks after your air and artillery have disorganized them. Don't confuse the two... and have them both available, if possible.

And, of course, keep in mind that occasionally you do want combat-mode reserves on the offensive for sheer crunch power, or move-mode defensive reserves (very nice for overrunning enemy tank battalions that penetrate into your rear to spot for their artillery, or for moving a good distance to patch a hole or

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guard a flank.) Always adapt your tactics to the situation.

Use your fortresses cleverly. Your boss won't let you give up cities. Take advantage of this. Make sure that cities won't fall to a rapid Soviet attack (build hogs, place AR 5 units in the cities, and use four or five steps), then fall back behind them. When the Soviets move up to surround the city, attack heavily and take advantage of the free barrage spotters and ZOC-blockers in their rear. Never forget that while units in cities cannot leave them, nobody ever forbade the garrisons to attack adjacent units. By the way, you should never build hedgehogs anywhere but in VP cities you intend to hold for some time—the supply expenditure could pay for a couple of panzer overruns instead, which are much more destructive to the enemy. And a level 1 hog is probably enough: it gives you combat shifts and a benefit on the bombardment table. A level 3 or 4 hog isn't worth it, unless you are defending the west edge of the map with almost no units and can't spend all the supply you're getting.

Don't give up. It's not over until the sudden-death victory is scored. The Soviet player has to take cities (and the Dnepr bank) to make that happen, which will force him to eat a lot of supply, giving your army a breather and a chance to regroup for a counteroffensive. Your cities can hold out for a long time; an AR 5 unit, under a hog, even DGed, is more likely to shift the surprise roll in your favor.

If you can ride out the first 10-12 turns of the game and hold onto Uman, Vinnitsa, and Nova-Ukrainka for that length of time, things start working in your favor. Once the eastern cities fall, the Russians have to move a long ways to reach more worthwhile targets, and you can fight them freely while they're advancing across the open spaces. If you can last long enough to fall back behind the Bug, the burden of attack is on the Russians, not on your defense.

This may be the hardest task in OCS. I've only pulled it off once, and I was aided by some Russian blunders (plus I had the optional supply in the organic trucks). But it's a very sweet accomplishment.

The Air War

I don't have a lot to say on the air war.

The Soviets have more planes, but theirs are not as good as the Luftwaffe. They should focus on ground support (though air superiority operations are not bad), since if they can defeat the German army fast enough the Germans won't have much time to use their qualitative edge. Remember, "the ultimate form of air superiority is a tank parked on your enemy's runway." Protect your airfields by adding levels and putting HQs on them for the extra flak DRMs, and the few German bombers will have a hard time even touching the Red Air Force on the ground.

The Germans need to use their planes in tight coordination with panzer strikes, and figure out how they're going to ride out the wave of Russian fighter attacks on their bases.

Both sides need to use at least some EQ replacements for rebuilding planes.

The Option Decisions

OCS options

Proportional-strength infantry divisions. Use this; it hurts the Russians worse than it hurts the Germans, and the Germans need all the help they can get.

Non-divisional units. I would recommend against using this rule in this game: the Soviet Guards tank battalions were intended to be used as the spearhead units. If you do use it, exempt the 4-5-5s.

Air unit reduction at long range. Use it... all the time.

Hube's Pocket options

I would strongly recommend using the balance option that allows the German organic trucks to start loaded. Without it, they have trouble attacking up north as they did historically.

The other options you can use or not as you see fit.

An additional option that my opponent Scott suggested: cut the starting Soviet supply stockpile from 60 to 30 SPs, but give them one additional SP each turn. This cuts down on the Soviet tendency to try and do everything at once in the opening turns.

A Historical Note

Here's a table, courtesy of Perry Andrus, showing the historical VPs for each turn of the game. Consider using it as a guide to pace yourself by, and perhaps a guide to where you should go next.

Turn	VP level	Changes
At start	12	Kiev, Belaya-Tserkov, Berdichev
Turn 2	14	Kirovograd
8	16	one Dnepr River hex
9	18	one Dnepr River hex
10	22	two Dnepr River hexes
10/16	28	reinforcing the flanks
17	31	Shepetova
19	35	Uman
21	38	Novo-Ukrainka
22	47	Pervomaysk, Vinnitsa
24	50	Beltsy
25	60	Globodzera, Chernovtsy
29	64	Ternopol

Historically, the Germans lost to sudden death on turns 10-13 and 25.

An interesting chart, by the way; I've usually found that Nova-Ukrainka falls well before Uman does, and that Vinnitsa is a more desirable and achievable target than Shepetova. Obviously the Soviet operational schedule didn't exactly correspond to the ones I've seen in play, or perhaps they were more daring than I am at driving deep to take poorly-defended cities.

