

THE BURNING BLUE

The Battle of Britain, 1940



PLAYER'S GUIDE

Learn to play the Luftwaffe

For the novice Luftwaffe player, *The Burning Blue* is intimidating. There seems to be a lot to learn, but in truth the game is simpler than it appears. So the following is an introduction designed to ease you into the game and help familiarize you with playing the Luftwaffe. This is not an exhaustive tutorial. It is a sketch of the basics.

You may find it helpful to follow the rule references in this introduction. Many of the examples are for a playthrough of scenario 3, so it will be helpful to have that scenario open as you read this.

Luftwaffe Objectives

Your objectives are to bomb targets in England. You must protect your bombers and get them to their targets intact. You are scored on the bomber units that reach the target and bomb it, and on losses inflicted on RAF fighters. You are penalized on disruptions inflicted on bombers before they reach the target, also on Luftwaffe aircraft shot down. Scores are also reduced when bombing into bad weather or getting lost on the way to the target.

Luftwaffe Gameplay

The Luftwaffe player's game is divided into two parts. The first part, Planning, requires you to determine your targets and raid forces, then plan a number of raids. The second part, Execution, is when you actually play the game, move raids on the map, and respond to events and combat.

Much of the Luftwaffe gameplay is in the planning stage, but the execution stage will prove engrossing as well, as you see your carefully crafted plan either work or slowly unravel.

PLANNING

Preparation

Before you can begin planning you must go through the early stages of setting up the game: deciding a scenario to play [6.1], rolling for the time of day [6.2], and determining the weather [6.3]. The output of all of these will impinge on the planning process. The scenario selection will determine what targets and forces are generated. The time of day may influence form-up times and sun direction. The weather affects where you can bomb and the altitudes you fly.

EXAMPLE: The examples of planning in this section assume scenario 3 is being played. The time of day is Late Morning (11:00 AM).

The Planning Process

The planning process comprises four stages:

1. **Raid Chits.** Determine the targets and raid forces by pulling raid chits and looking up the results on the Historical Raids Table.
2. **Create Raids.** Create raids from the bomber and fighter units assigned by the chits.
3. **Plan Raids.** Plot the course of each raid to its target and back.
4. **Roll Form Up.** Calculate endurance and roll for form up.

If you agree with your opponent which scenario you will play, and determine the time of day and weather a day or more ahead of the game session, planning can be done prior to arrival at the game. You can work on the problem the night before and turn up with your plan in hand. This saves you from rushing the plan on the day of the game. In general, we find that the longer you spend on planning, the better the plan will be.

Stage I. Raid Chits

Rule 6.4.1 describes the Historical Raid Tables. Each line on the table represents an actual historical air raid, its target and the fighter and bomber forces that comprised the raid. Each line is also assigned a raid chit ID letter or letters and a VP (Victory Point) and RL (Response Level) value (both used later in scoring).

RAID CHIT POOL

Create a chit pool using the raid chits listed at the top of the table [6.4.2].

EXAMPLE: For Scenario 3 you would create a pool of chits from A to Z and AA to UU and drop them in a container like a cup.

PICKING CHITS

Once you have created the chit pool you randomly pull a number of chits, keeping them secret from the RAF player. The number of chits to be pulled is listed at the top of the Historical Raids Table.

Rule 6.4.2 also details a number of other restrictions on the chits you can pull. Some of these are obvious. For example, if you pick a chit that matches a target you've already picked, you discard it. If the weather over the target is bad, you can discard it. Or if there aren't enough units to launch the raid, you discard the chit. Less obvious is the Victory Point threshold, a restriction based on the total VP values of the raid chits pulled. This is designed to prevent you drawing raid forces that are altogether too large or too small.

You should end with a number of raid chits pulled. These should tell you the targets you are going to attack and the fighter and bombing forces you are going to attack with.

EXAMPLE: In Scenario 3, you pick raid chit F, a 22 VP raid on North Weald and Hornchurch. The Victory Point threshold for the scenario is 28, so a second chit cannot exceed 6 VP. It takes a few rejected picks before raid chit LL is finally pulled, a 4 VP raid on Debden.

Raid Chit F provides three Gruppen of bombers and six of fighters. Raid chit LL comprises one bomber Gruppe and two Gruppen of fighters.

Stage 2. Create Raids

Now you know your targets and your forces. Next you have to figure out what raids you will create in your plan of attack.

RAIDS

Each raid is like a 'bucket' you can drop fighter and bomber units into. The contents of that bucket will move and fight together on the map. You can take the units assigned by a raid chit and make them into one big raid, or split them into lots of little raids if you wish.

Section 6.4.3 describes this and lays down some important rules. One rule is that you cannot share forces between raids from different chits.

EXAMPLE: In our scenario 3 example, raid chit F's units cannot be mixed with those of raid chit LL's.

Another rule is that you must make enough raids to bomb each target listed on the chit's entry in the Historical Raids Table. This makes the business of dividing bomber units between raids a critical decision.

EXAMPLE: If the table lists two targets for a chit, you must make at least two bombing raids. If you have two targets and just two bomber Gruppen, then you will assign each Gruppe to a separate raid. If you had three Gruppen, as in scenario 3's raid chit F, you could assign two to one of the attacks, or even make a third raid to attack one of the targets a second time.

When forming raids you are allowed to break up Gruppen into smaller Staffeln if you wish, within the limits of the counter mix, at a rate of three Staffeln to one Gruppen [3.3.2]. This is useful when you have lots of targets and few units.



ASSIGNING FIGHTERS

Another key decision you will have to make will be how to assign your fighter units. Fighters assigned to raids with bombers are termed 'escorts'. You can divide these between 'close escorts' and 'top cover'. The difference between these types of escort will become clear when we describe raid execution later on. Note that scenarios 1, 2 and 3 restrict close escorts to Me110 units only.

You can also assign fighter units to their very own raids, called 'Freie Jagd', that have no bombers. You may wish to use Freie Jagd to sweep the sky ahead of the raids clear, or to act as decoys for the bombing raids.

EXAMPLE: The targets for raid chit F are North Weald and Hornchurch. There are three bomber Gruppen, one each of a Do17, Ju88 and He111. The fighter complement is five Me109 Gruppen and one of Me110. Scenario 3 has a scenario special rule restricting close escorts to Me110 only.

In order to spread the RAF defence you decide to create four separate raids. Three will contain bombers and the fourth will contain only Freie Jagd units. The final makeup of raids are:

Raid 01. Target: North Weald. 1 Gruppe Do17; 1 Gruppe Me110 (close escort); 1 Gruppe Me109 (top cover).

Raid 03. Target: Hornchurch. 1 Gruppe Ju88; 1 Gruppe Me109 (top cover).

Raid 04. Target: Hornchurch. 1 Gruppe He111; 1 Gruppe Me109 (top cover).

Raid 06. 2 Gruppe Me109 (Freie Jagd).

SELECTING UNIT COUNTERS

When making up raids, you will have to select which actual unit counters you will use. This is important for fighter units, as the airfield a unit is assigned to affects its endurance (i.e. its range; note that this doesn't affect bombers, which have unlimited endurance). All units must be assigned from the Luftflotte (LF) listed on the raid chit [4.2 and 4.2.1].

EXAMPLE: Both raid chits F and LL are in Luftflotte 2, so all units will be LF 2 units. Because these raids are quite deep and endurance may be an issue, you decide to select Me109 units from airfields closest to the coast. Selecting Me110s presents no such problem as they have enough endurance for almost any task. The resulting raids and forces are as follows:

Raid 01. Target: North Weald. I KG3 (Do17); I ZG26 (Me110, close escort); II JG53 (Me109, top cover).

Raid 02. Target: Debden. I KG76 (Do17); II ZG26 (Me110, close escort); III ZG26 (Me110, top cover).

Raid 03. Target: Hornchurch. II KG76 (Ju88); I JG52 (Me109, top cover).

Raid 04. Target: Hornchurch. I KG53 (He111); II JG52 (Me109, top cover).

Raid 06. I & II JG26 (Me109, Freie Jagd).

Stage 3. Plan Raids

Each raid you create must be plotted on the map. At its simplest a plot comprises five things:

1. A start point (or 'form up point').
2. A route (or 'course') to the target hex and back.
3. A finish point (or 'recovery point').
4. The altitudes of all the units in the raid.
5. The time of the form up.

Raid planning is something of an art. Once plotted you are committed to that course of action and cannot change it to react to what the RAF defenders do. So you have to think ahead to possible contingencies.

Once you are experienced with the game you will want to consider deception strategies as part of your plan. For your first playing you'll want to keep it simple, but for subsequent games think about the deception possibilities outlined throughout this guide.

PLOTTING GUIDES

The raid plotting guide at the back of the scenario book is an invaluable checklist for plotting raids. Also the Quick Start scenarios in the scenario book provide illustrations on how plotting is done. You will learn much from studying these.

FORM UP AND RECOVERY POINTS

Rule 9.2.4 lays out the requirements for a form up point. As landmarks are defined in rule 2.2.3 as including coastline

hexes, there are a lot of hexes in France to launch raids from. If you have Me109s in the raid it is a good rule of thumb to have a form up point within four hexes of their airfield(s) or else this will reduce their endurance [17.1.2].

Recovery points are selected like form up points and in many cases you will choose the same hex for recovery as for form up.

EXAMPLE: Raid 01 is attacking North Weald. Because the raid includes Me109s you decide to take the shortest route possible. The closest hex to North Weald is Cap Gris-Nez in hex 1438, which coincidentally is in the same hex as Wissant airfield, home of the top cover Gruppe, II JG53. You decide to make the same hex the recovery point.

RAID COURSE

Rule 9.2.2 describes plotting the course. This can be as simple as drawing a line with a ruler on the map straight from the form up point to the target and then back again.

The problem with direct, shortest-line routes is that they are predictable to the enemy and permit him to organize his defences. It's best to save direct routes for quick raids on nearby targets, like Dover. For deeper raids it is worth adding a dogleg into the course *en route* the target.

In general, you don't want to plot too many waypoints on the way to the target. As we will see during raid execution, waypoints increase the chances of a raid getting lost. As a rule keep the number of waypoints on the route to the target to two or less. Try to place them on landmark hexes, preferably where the weather does not obscure the ground, as landmarks provide modifiers for navigation checks [9.3.4].

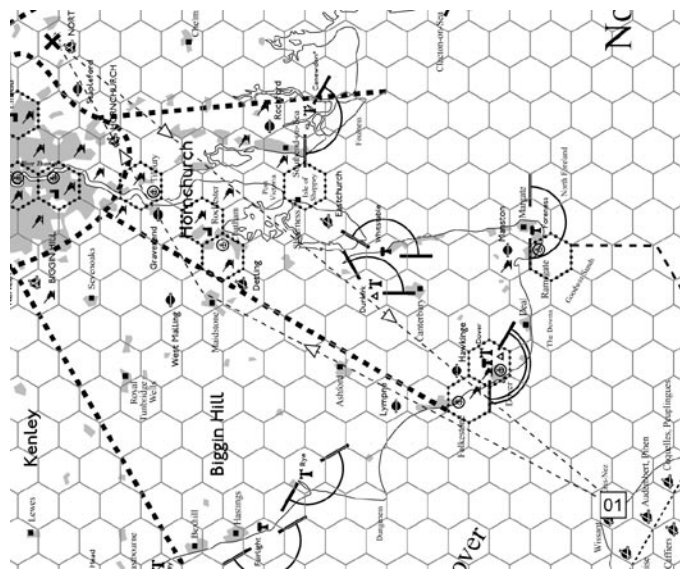


ILLUSTRATION: Raid 01's course to North Weald feints toward Biggin Hill and then turns at Maidstone toward its target (marked with a cross).

When coordinating multiple raids, rules 9.2.5 and 9.2.6 are important. The first rule allows you to split raids up if you wish. This is a useful tactic where you wish to confuse a defence. The second rule forces you to keep raids separate where possible, encouraging Freie Jagd in particular to operate at arm's length from the bombing raids.

RAID ALTITUDE

The choice of altitude [9.2.2] for the units in a raid is based on a number of factors. It's always best to start with the altitude of the bombers. In general you want the bombers to be as high as possible. The higher they are the longer it takes to get interceptors to them and the less opportunity the RAF have of gaining altitude superiority over the raid.

It's possible to fly bombers as high as Angels 22, but there are three reasons why you might not want to do this:

1. A look at the Form Up Table [9.2.8] reveals that the higher the raid, the greater the chance it will form up late.
2. A look at the Bomb Scoring Table [16.3.1] shows that bombing attacks above Angels 16 begin to suffer column shifts, reducing the VPs gained from bombing.
3. A look at the Luftwaffe Endurance Table [17.1.2] reveals that the higher the raid, the more endurance any Me109 escorts lose.

For these reasons you will probably keep bombers to Angels 12-16.

EXAMPLE: Raid 01's North Weald target is deep, which might push your raid lower for the sake of the Me109s' endurance, but you are afraid that a deep raid at Angels 12 might make it too easy for RAF interceptors to gain an altitude advantage, so you settle on Angels 16.

Now you've set the bomber altitude, you can set the escorts. Rule 9.1.3 describes the options. Close escorts go at the same altitude as the bombers. Top cover is generally placed above the bombers. The Escort Reaction Table [13.3.4] reveals that escorts 6 Angels above the bombers will find it more difficult to react, so it's best to keep the top cover 2 or 4 Angels above the bombers.

EXAMPLE: In Raid 01 I KG3 (Do17) is at Angels 16. The close escort I ZG26 (Me110) is also at Angels 16, while the top cover II JG53 (Me109) is at Angels 20. The top cover won't go any higher because of the escort reaction modifier and the impact on form up endurance.

Freie Jagd are not restricted like bomber raids. If you plot a Freie Jagd as a classic fighter sweep, Angels 24 is a good height that will keep the sweep safely above the interceptors without hurting endurance. However, if you wish the Freie Jagd is to act as decoys you might prefer an altitude where the Freie Jagd resembles a bombing raid—somewhere in the region of Angels 12-16—though this will leave the sweep vulnerable to attacks from interceptors at higher altitude.

FORM UP TIME

The form up time is the time of day you want the raid to form. This can be on the first turn of the scenario or up to an hour and a half (18 turns) later [9.2.7]. There are a number of strategies for setting the form up time.

- (a) Setting a raid's form up at the start of a scenario or within the first few turns, so that a form up counter must be placed at set up [9.3.1], means the RAF player may get enough early warning to set up some units on the map at the start [6.6.5].
- (b) Leaving form up until later (say, 20-25 minutes into the scenario) means the RAF gets no early warning at the

start, but will get a chance to scramble units before your raids form. (Albeit at a low Scramble Limit [20.1.1]. In some scenarios that might mean the RAF will build their response more slowly than in (a).

- (c) When coordinating multiple raids you may wish to stagger form up times so that a first wave precedes a second wave, or a Freie Jagd sweeps out ahead of the rest of the waves.
- (d) Setting very late form up times (30+ minutes) is possible, but is best done where you are playing with complex deception plans, such as sending a second wave off at 40 minutes after the RAF player has expended himself against the first wave that launched at 0 minutes. This is advanced play and not recommended for novices.

WARNING: Some first-time Luftwaffe players have tried playing with very late form up times, with the result that players end up sitting around, waiting for things to happen. This is a great way to bore your opponent. Only use late form ups where (d) applies. If it's your first time playing and are unsure what to do, set all your raids to form on the first turn.

EXAMPLE: You decide to send the Freie Jagd off ahead first, and then stagger the rest of the raids five minutes behind it. The second raid against Hornchurch will be staggered a further ten minutes after, so as to deceive the RAF and (hopefully) get him to concentrate on one rather than the other. The plotted form up times are:

Raid 06 (Freie Jagd): 11:00 AM.

Raids 01, 02, 03 (Targeted on North Weald, Debden, Hornchurch): 11:05 AM.

Raid 04 (Targeted on Hornchurch): 11:15 AM.

Stage 4. Roll Form Up

By this point your plan should be almost complete. You know your targets, you've formed raids and you've plotted them to the target and back. You have their form up times figured.

Now you complete your preparation by filling out logsheets for each unit [3.2.2]. The logsheets allow you to track each raid, and each unit in the raids.

As part of this preparation you determine the endurance for your fighter units. Rule 17.1 tells you how to calculate the recovery time (i.e. the time before which your fighters must return to base if they are to avoid losses due to running out of fuel). Rule 17.1.2 tells you how to account for form up altitude and figure the distance from an airfield into the calculation.

EXAMPLE: Raid 01 is forming up at 11:05 AM. It contains an Me110 Gruppe (I ZG26) at Angels 16 and an Me109 Gruppe (II JG53) at Angels 20. Adding the endurance values from the Luftwaffe Aircraft Data Chart [3.2.3] you get a basic recovery time of 2:25 PM for the Me110s and 12:45 PM for the Me109s.

However, both escorts are in the 16-20 Angels row on the Luftwaffe Endurance Table, and so must subtract 15 minutes from the recovery time. As ZG26 forms up 11 hexes from its airfield at Yrench it subtracts an extra 10 minutes. (II JG53 forms up in its airfield hex, so is not penalized further.) So the final recovery times are 2:00 PM for the Me110s and 12:30 PM for the Me109s.

Now you have the recovery times figured, you roll for form up [9.2.8]. This will tell you if any of the raids form up late.

EXAMPLE: Raid 01 has an altitude of Angels 16 for the purposes of the Form Up Table and so applies a +1 modifier. A 9 is rolled, increased to 10 for a Late 2 result. Raid 01 now forms up at 11:15 AM rather than 11:05 AM.

The 10 minute delay is going to create problems for II JG53, the raid top cover. Though the raid starts later, the recovery time remains the same: 12:30 PM. In effect the Me109 Gruppe has lost a 10 minute reserve of endurance.

All the other raids roll better dice than Raid 01 and form up on time.

With the actual form up times rolled, you are ready to begin play.

EXECUTION

After completing your planning each raid is like a wind-up toy, ready to be released and trundle across the map. You can begin to execute the raids.

Set Up

Before you can actually start to move raids, you have to set up on the map.

FORM UP COUNTERS

As rule 9.3.1 points out, form up counters have to be placed on the map to tell the RAF player that you are coming. For LF2 raids you place the counters four turns before the raid's form up time; for LF3 raids it is one turn. Normally, the counters are placed in the Form Up Phase of the turn.

However, if the raid is due to form up soon after play begins the form up counter would appear before the scenario's start time.

EXAMPLE: The scenario starts at 11:00 AM, but Raid 02 is due to form up at 11:05 AM. This means the form up counter would be placed at 10:45 AM.

Where this happens, the form up counters are placed in the Luftwaffe Set Up Phase.

DUMMY FORM UPS

Rule 9.3.1 gives you some dummy form up counters that allow you to confuse the RAF player as to your intentions by littering France with fake form ups. The temptation is to always use these dummies—after all they are free. However, placing them at the start of the game may increase the total of detected raid strength the RAF player uses for early warning [6.6.5].

In truth dummies should only be used when playing with a deception plan. For example, where the Luftwaffe player staggers their raids, or wishes to keep the RAF's attention on LF2 so as to give them little warning of a late LF3 raid. Novice players should avoid dummies until they have a game or two under their belt.

EXAMPLE: In our scenario 3 playthrough, you decide not to use dummies.

FORM UP DETECTION

As rule 11.6 indicates, once you place a form up counter, a detection check [11.2] is made to determine the raid strength (strength only, not altitude). This will give the RAF player an indication of the size of the raid.

If form up counters are set up at the start, detection checks on them may increase the number of intercepting squadrons the RAF player can set up on the map due to early warning [6.6.5].

EXAMPLE: In our scenario 3 example all the raids place form up counters before 11:00 AM, so form up counters are placed and the raid strength checked for each one. The results are:

Raid 01 (3 Gruppen): Strength 30+

Raid 02 (3 Gruppen): Strength 100+

Raid 03 (2 Gruppen): Strength 30+

Raid 04 (2 Gruppen): Strength 10+

Raid 06 (2 Gruppen): Strength 20+

Though most of the detection results were poor, a total strength of 190+ is still detected by the RAF. The Early Warning table for scenario 3 allows the RAF player to set up three squadrons on the map, two 'early' and one 'late'.

Detection

In the Form Up Phase of the turn that it forms up, the raid actually enters play. It's now you encounter the detection rules in earnest. The detection rules, from 11.2 to 11.5, show you how to perform detection checks on your raids when called for. The results of checks give out altitude and strength indications for your raids. These indications MAY BE INACCURATE and tend to indicate too little strength and altitudes that are too low. If you're lucky, the RAF player will seriously underestimate the size and altitude of a raid.

As rule 11.5.6 points out, a detected raid can have more detection attempts made against it. As subsequent detection produces more accurate results, you have to update the information. Over time the RAF picture of a raid is likely to improve.

RDF AND OBSERVER CORPS

Raids will be detected initially by RDF, and then by the Observer Corps as they fly over land. RDF is usually very effective. Unless the raid is very small in size (i.e. a single Staffel or Gruppen) it is unlikely to avoid detection. The Observer Corps is generally less effective than RDF, particularly in poor weather. Routing over hazy sectors or foul weather may permit a small raid to disappear from view.

HIDDEN MOVEMENT

As rule 11.1.1 describes, undetected raids are taken off the map and tracked on the plotting map. It can be detected again, usually as the consequence of a Random Events roll. However, on those occasions where it moves into a location where it can be tallied or attacked, it is placed on the map on its undetected side. See rule 11.1.1 (b), (c) and (d).

Movement

The thing to remember about Luftwaffe movement is that you move your raids AFTER the RAF player moves, so he has to anticipate where you are going.

In general, bombing raids will move 3 MP each turn. It's also best to move Freie Jagd at this rate if they are acting as decoys. If a raid comprises only fighters and is on the way home, such as Freie Jagd or escorts that have broken from their bombing raids with Pancake orders, you should move them 4 MP.

Move raids along the course you plotted for them. If you plotted a course line that didn't follow the grain of the hexes you will sometimes get the option of two hexes to move into. Take advantage of these, as it adds some uncertainty into your movement and may deceive the RAF player.

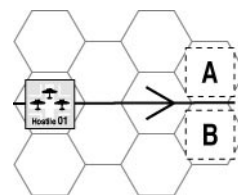


ILLUSTRATION: This raid has the option of two hexes, A and B, that it can move into.

NAVIGATION

As rule 9.3.4 outlines, each time a raid reaches a waypoint there's a chance it may be lost. Setting waypoints in landmark hexes [2.2.3] is important to reduce the chance of getting lost.

Navigation checks can also happen as the result of a random event, so deep raids are likely to make a check at some point. Fortunately, entering a landmark hex during movement gives the raid a chance (with a -2 penalty) of getting back on track. This makes courses with lots of landmarks en route highly desirable.

EXAMPLE: For Raid 03's attack on Hornchurch, you plot a course that takes it via Eastchurch and then across the Medway and the Thames estuary. If the raid gets lost it cannot avoid flying over a coastline landmark on the run-in to its target.

You'll have to roll a navigation check at the target hex. A Decoy result here will cause you to bomb with a penalty. However, if you are Lost there's a chance you will divert to the raid's alternate target listed on its raid chit. Bad weather at the target can also force a diversion. A diversion means plotting a new route on the fly from the target hex to the alternate target and then back to the recovery point [9.3.5].

Note that navigation is only important on the way to the target. Once you have completed your bombing, it has no further effect on play.

Combat

Air combat is key to the game. Read through the whole of rule 13. Now, there are two kinds of combat result in the game:

1. In theory, inflicting sufficient losses will actually destroy an enemy unit, but in practice this will never happen. Aircraft losses score VPs (see rule 22 for more detail). So, losses are a way of racking up VPs. Bomber losses score more than fighters, so you will need to protect your bombers from attack as much as possible. Luftwaffe losses also score more VPs for the RAF when shot down over England (because the crews become prisoners), which is a strong case for trying to route raids over the sea where possible and limiting their exposure to land.
2. The other kind of combat result is disruption [13.5.1]. Disruption has a number of effects: it reduces the combat strength of fighter units; it increases the chance a unit will generate stragglers when attacked; and it reduces

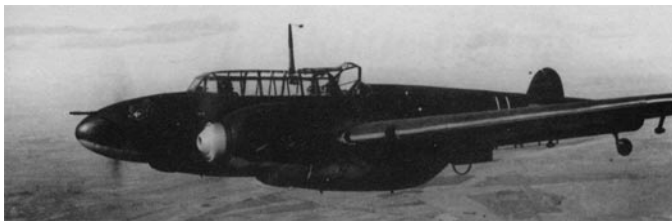
the bombing VP scored by bombers when they reach the target. Finally, if a unit reaches its maximum disruption level the unit pancakes and goes straight home.

Though losses can tip victory either way, it is disruption results that are the meat of play. The RAF will need to score disruptions on your bombers BEFORE reaching their targets to win. Scoring disruptions on your fighters will thin their ranks, but that's okay. It's the job of your fighters to absorb attacks by the RAF. Keeping the bombers safe is their primary mission.

Fighter Gruppen can take three disruptions, and so will usually accept two or three combats before they pancake. By contrast RAF squadrons can only absorb one disruption before running for home, so engaging squadrons at every opportunity and inflicting disruptions should be your goal.

The combat results tables and Cohesion Table make it easy to score disruption results against fighters, but not against bombers. The RAF will be doing their best to bounce the bombers and rack up lots of modifiers from the combat results to get those vital cohesion hits.

A look at the Interception Table reveals the RAF player will increase his chances of getting a bounce if he attacks the bombers from around 4 to 6 Angels above, and up sun. (He gets up sun benefits from being above the target in the same hex, so the RAF player will be trying to climb as hard as he can and aiming for precise intercepts on your raids.) Coordinating all the elements of your fighter arm against these RAF tactics is vital.



FREIE JAGD

Of all the parts of your attack, the Freie Jagd raids will be the hardest to get right. Sometimes they will work spectacularly and sweep the skies of many RAF squadrons. Sometimes they will cruise over southern England without a sight of the enemy. In any raid plan you will want some Freie Jagd to draw attention away from the bombing raids.

As a rule of thumb, assigning a quarter to a third of your fighter Gruppen as Freie Jagd is sound strategy. (Of course, if the raid chits give you barely enough fighter cover to escort your bombers, feel free to ignore this advice.)

The simplest plan might be to form the Freie Jagd up a turn ahead of the bombing raid and launch it along the bomber's course. Or you could plot a course like an inverted 'U' that sweeps across England.

Freie Jagd are your only units that can tally the enemy. Read through rule 12. The essence of the tally rule is that once an enemy is tallied, they are to be pursued and attacked. Your Freie Jagd will divert from their plotted course to chase a tallied target.

If the RAF player hasn't figured out which of your raids is Freie Jagd, making tally attempts may reveal their presence. As the chances of tallying an enemy decline rapidly beyond a range of one hex, you may wish to be careful of attempting tallies at long distances.

The other feature of Freie Jagd is their ability to establish orbits [9.4.1, 10.3.2]. You can order them to patrol the target hex, for example, or a location on the approaches to a target.

If a Freie Jagd gets drawn away from its orbit or course due to pursuit of a tallied target, rule 9.3.7 tells you how to get the fighter unit back on course once it has given up the pursuit.

ESCORTS

The bulk of your air fighting will be done by escorts reacting to RAF attacks. A successful reaction can cancel an enemy interception and allow your escort fighters to roll an interception and combat against the attackers.

Sadly, reaction doesn't work when the RAF catches stragglers during interception [13.3.2]. Though attacks on stragglers don't inflict disruption hits, they allow the RAF player to pick up some easy VPs.

To understand escort reaction read 13.3.4 carefully while examining the Escort Reaction Table. You will notice a number of things:

1. Escorts don't work so well if the raid is flying through poor weather, so try to route the raid above or below cloud.
2. It's worth having close escorts if possible, as they increase your chances of a reaction. In scenarios 1, 2 and 3 you are restricted to using Me110s as escorts. Close escorts take a penalty to their combat strength [see 13.4.1] but this is okay. Your escorts are there to take hits instead of the bombers.
3. If all the escorts are disrupted, reaction starts becoming more difficult. Escorting with more than one Gruppen is a way to stave off this moment.
4. If the top cover escorts are too high (6 Angels or more), they might not react. Why might you want to put the top cover high? In case the RAF player decides to attack the top cover to tie it up or disrupt it before other squadrons attack the bombers. Top cover that is too low might be a tempting target for a bounce.

One thing you will notice is that when the RAF attacks with wing formations [20.2], they have a much better chance of getting some of their fighters to the bombers. It's always worth reacting to wings to try and break the wing up. If portions of the wing survive the attack on the bombers without losing cohesion, they will hang around for a second bite of the cherry.

BREAKING UP RAIDS

As your raids progress to their targets they may begin to break up into smaller raids. Sometimes this will be because you plotted the raid to do so [9.2.5]. But also Freie Jagd units may break away from their raid to chase RAF squadrons, while pancaking units break out to run home [9.3.6].

Don't forget that you can always voluntarily pancake a unit [10.2.7, 10.3.4]. This is vital if you have Me109 units that are running low on endurance.

EXAMPLE: In our scenario 3 playthrough Raid 01, targeting North Weald, formed up late at 11:15 AM. II JG53, the Me109 top cover escort, has a recovery time of 12:30 PM.

Travelling at 3 MP per turn the raid reaches North Weald at 11:50 AM and the top cover has had to react and fight on two consecutive game turns, reducing the recovery time to 12:20 PM. You realize that escorting the raid all the way back will take another 35 minutes and cause the Me109s to run over their endurance. At some point they will have to pancake and detach from the rest of the raid so that they can fly at 4 MP back to Wissant before their fuel runs out. (Hopefully without getting into any more combats that might affect endurance.) With this in mind you detach II JG53 at 12:00 PM to form Raid 07, which flies home at top speed.



Bombing

To win the scenario, the Luftwaffe player needs to bomb the target. Most bombing will be level bombing, and as rule 16 shows all you have to do is overfly the target. Unless you fail your navigation roll and are forced to divert, you bomb.

When you bomb just read off the VPs you score from the Bomb Scoring Table [16.3.1]. However, penalties may apply. Disruptions hurt bombing badly, as does getting lost and bad weather.

If the target is an airfield or RDF station there are chances to do extra damage to airfield capacity, sector operations rooms, squadrons on the ground and the like. Roll as indicated in rule 16.4. Any extra damage you inflict will help (and may have longer-term consequences in a campaign game) but unless you can catch a bunch of squadrons on the ground, don't expect it to win you the game.

DIVE BOMBING

Rule 16.2.2 expresses the prerequisites for dive bombing. Ju87s, Erpro 210 and Jabos can dive bomb, while Ju88s and Do17s may dive bomb only convoys and RDF.

Always take the opportunity to dive bomb where possible. It gives you a negative column shift on the Bomb Scoring Table that can increase your bombing VP by 50%.

The dive bomb attack involves diving to Angels 2 and taking a cohesion check. Afterwards, your raid will have to head home at Angels 2, and you should reflect this in your plot [9.2.3].

LOW-LEVEL RAIDS

Low-level raids are very rare in the Historical Raids Tables but permit the raid to fly at Angels 0 [9.2.3]. No other units can fly at this altitude, though top cover can accompany low-level raiders by flying above them. However, this is a bad strategy.

The advantage of flying at Angels 0 is that you can ignore RDF detection, unless within range of Chain Home Low [11.3.4]. However, this only applies if ALL units in the raid are at Angels 0, so it's best to send low-level raids off without any escort and trust to late detection (if any) to protect the raid.

Like dive-bombers, low-level raiders get a column shift on the Bomb Scoring Table, making them useful units.

STRAFING

If you have Freie Jagd it is good practise to try and plot a return leg via an airfield hex. Unless the Freie Jagd are pancaking when they reach the airfield, they can strafe it and pick up some bonus VPs [9.4.1, 16.2.4]. Note that there are no VPs for strafing in scenario 5.

SCORING

Read rule 22 on scoring carefully. The key thing to remember as the Luftwaffe player is that you must try to beat the VP total of all your raid chits put together.

So your bombing VP for a raid must try to equal or exceed the VP value of the chit that spawned the raid (or a *pro rata* proportion of the value if that chit resulted in multiple bombing raids). The raid chit VPs assume that eligible raids will be dive bombing or performing low level raids, so always plan to use those options when permitted, otherwise you are going to fall behind the grade.

The VP from aircraft losses can tip the game from the win or loss column into a draw (or vice versa), but losses alone won't win you the game. You have to get the bombers safely to their target and score those bombing VP.

RAID MATCHING

Unless this is your very first game, you should always insist on playing the raid matching optional rule [22.1.1]. It forces the RAF player to try and engage every bombing raid by spreading their forces, rather than ganging up to defeat a single raid.

RESPONSE LEVEL

The response level (RL) rules [20.1] penalize the RAF player if he scrambles too many squadrons. Therefore the response level is where a deception plan can reap dividends. If your pattern of raiding can persuade the RAF player to scramble more squadrons than he's allowed, you will gain VPs.

MASTERING THE GAME

The Planning and Execution descriptions in this guide have missed out on a few useful wrinkles of the system that the diligent Luftwaffe player should master.

WEATHER

The weather rules [19] deserve some study, particularly the weather counters.

Most of the weather you will see will tend to be low (below Angels 8) or high (above Angels 20). Mostly, your raids will fly through clear weather in the Angels 12-18 range. Still, weather can sometimes get in the way, and so you may have to plot the raid to fly above or below it. Flying above bad weather can impair the effectiveness of the Observer Corps and will sometimes affect RAF tally attempts, but bombing through it will reduce your bombing VPs.

Very occasionally, you might consider flying INTO patchy or broken cloud. Very deep raids have low VP values that may make bombing feasible through bad weather. Instead of rejecting a raid chit that requires you to bomb into bad weather, it might make sense to fly through the cloud in the hope it will screen your raid from the RAF.

EXAMPLE: In scenario 2 there is broken cloud at Angels 10 in the Middle Wallow weather zone. Raid chit S is picked. You decide not to reject the chit, but plot the raids to Abingdon, Boscombe Down and Upavon though the cloud at Angels 10. You hope that the RAF does not tally the raids in the cloud and catch them. If the raids are not caught the raid-matching column shifts will balance out those for bombing out of broken cloud and give you a good chance of winning.

The Weather Contingency optional rule [9.3.8] is another one to keep up your sleeve. If there's cloud on the route home the rule will permit you to dive into the cloud, to protect yourself from enemy tallies.

Crosswinds, if they exist, may provide a strong disincentive to send raids too high.

EXAMPLE: If crosswinds are at Angels 16+ it may make sense to keep bombers at Angels 14.

Headwinds provide a particularly difficult challenge for raids from LF2 [19.2.8]. When flying in a northwesterly direction bombing raids will be slowed from 3 to 2 MP. This will give the RAF player plenty of time to scramble raids and position them. Furthermore, they really hurt fighter endurance and a deep raid into headwinds may see Me109s having to pancake early to avoid losses on recovery [17.2.4].

The one advantage of headwinds is that they increase movement on the homeward leg, allowing bombers and fighters a swift journey home.

CHANNEL PATROLS

After picking raid chits you must pick a chit for your Channel patrols [6.4.4]. Channel patrols are Me109 units assigned to a holding box on the map, ready to jump any RAF units that stray out over the English Channel or France.

Usually they don't have much to do; however the Impromptu Fighter Sweep random event might allow you to use a Channel patrol unit to attack RAF units near the Kent coast.

If you are willing to expend VPs you can divert one Channel patrol Gruppe and plot it as a Freie Jagd raid [21.1.1]. If you are short on fighters for escort duties this may be a good option.

You can also expend VPs to allocate Channel patrol units as withdrawal escorts [21.2]. This allows you to add the patrols to the raid as escorts when they reach the coast. This might be a good option where the raid is deep and liable to lose its escorts, and the RAF player is aggressive enough to try and pursue your raids into the North Sea or Channel, hoping to pick up some easy kills.

Look carefully at the map when arranging withdrawal escorts. Withdrawal escorts can be plotted quite deep into RAF airspace.

EXAMPLE: Sheerness, in hex 2331 at the mouth of the Thames, is a legitimate hex for withdrawal escorts as it is adjacent to the North Sea weather zone.

RAIDS FROM LF3

Raids from LF3 have a few wrinkles unique to them. The first is that they tend to be at longer distances than raids from LF2, because of the expanse of the English Channel. Me109s, particularly those based at Caen, will tend to be closer to their maximum endurance and more sensitive to late delays in forming up. The Cherbourg forward basing rule [17.1.3] is useful for avoiding any endurance embarrassments.

However, you may want to form up at Caen, which is outside the range of RDF. This means that no form up counters are placed and the earliest the RAF player knows about a raid is when it is picked up moving into the Baie de Seine movement box. If you're lucky such a raid won't be detected at all.

JABOS

Jabos are a hybrid task for the Luftwaffe [9.4.4]. They start as bombing units, but after they have bombed they (and any escorts) turn into Freie Jagd.

Non-*Expro* 210 Jabos must avoid being caught at all costs. If intercepted the Jabos jettison their bombs and lose all chance of bombing VPs.

Jabos can move at 4 MP each turn and fly laden at altitudes up to Angels 24. They can also dive bomb [16.2.2]. Their fragility and tendency to jettison means that Jabos are therefore best employed in high, fast raids employing a dive-bomb attack.

Note that as they become Freie Jagd after bombing, there's nothing to stop Jabos picking up some bonus VP by strafing an airfield on the way home, and you should plot a course accordingly [9.4.1]. (Though not in scenario 5, where a special rule prevents you scoring any VP for strafing.)

ACK-ACK AND BALLOONS

The British heavy Ack-Ack [14.1.2] is not very effective. Nevertheless, it is best to plot courses to avoid it as much as possible, particularly *en route* to the target. It makes no sense to give the RAF player some free shots. Remember that HAA increases detection card values by one for tallies, which may lead RAF squadrons directly toward raids.

Light Ack-Ack [14.1.3] projects only to Angels 4, but is somewhat more effective than HAA and this should be borne in mind when dive-bombing or making low-level raids. Never forget that every RAF airfield is armed with LAA.

Balloons cause cohesion checks for bombers entering their hexes [15.1]. You should keep level bombing raids honest and well above Angels 4. However, sometimes you will have to dive bomb into balloon hexes and risk a cohesion check from them. (Note that this cohesion check DOES affect Jabo dive bombers, because it affects all bombing-tasked units.)

Though it's possible to have your Freie Jagd attack the balloons and shoot them down preparatory to bombing [15.2], this seems like a waste of fighters. In practice balloons are like strafing in that they are something to do on the way home to pick up bonus VP.

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