

Player's Notes

By Dean Essig

What you are holding is a game which has undergone both two decades of research (including going there to examine the ground) by Carl Fung and over two years of testing by some of the best players in the world. I am indebted to their ability to show up time after time after time to expend their effort making this game the beneficiary of their deep experience. Here, I will try to distill a small portion of what was learned (some dead ends are not mentioned as the game was subsequently changed rendering them moot).

Arab Expectations. It's easy (as the Arab player) to expect to do too much, but it is different on both Fronts because of the way VPs are allocated and counted. The primary difference between the Fronts is that the Egyptians count their VPs only at the end of play, while the Syrians use the highest VP hex total on any single turn. So, the Egyptians can (and should) be content to cross the canal, establish dense defenses with a depth limited to 5 hexes or so, and worry only about taking nearby VP hexes close to the end of play. They have the time to do that, unlike the Syrians.

Narrow and Dense: Egyptian Defenses. The Egyptians under Sadat learned a very deep lesson in the 1967 war: Racing out in deep advances will get their units destroyed and bring about defeat. To counter this risk, their plan was to win the war by not doing very much: cross the canal, set up dense interlocking defensive positions (turn turtle as it was), and invite the Israelis to test their mettle against the thousands of Sagger ATGM missiles arrayed to kill anything approaching the Suez Canal. If they were still doing this when the US and UN called a halt to active operations—the war was won.

This takes self-discipline. It will be hard to keep all your units tight and close (3-5 hexes, at most) to the canal while avoiding the siren's song of the nearby VP hexes. If you can collect some up in the waning turns of the game, that's one thing—grabbing them early on with an extended amoeba-shaped defense position (read: much longer front to control) either without PD (read: no Sagger) or one with a serious lack of force concentration is just asking for trouble. I've seen it happen plenty. You don't want to do this. I know this is rare in my games, but here it is difficult for the Egyptians to be **too** cautious. Keep your armored brigades and divisions on your side of the canal until you have a chance to crush an Israeli attack and inflict losses they cannot withstand. Don't just hang around east of the canal acting like they can defend part of the line—against a skilled Israeli player, your tank Formations have a life expectancy of only **one** turn. Let me say that again: They will last *One Turn*—a single day. Make it matter.

Syrians and the Bum's Rush. Turning Turtle? The Egyptians need to do so, but the Syrians better not. Let's not kid ourselves, if the Syrians don't snag a goodly number of VPs in the first three turns or so, they are not going to be getting them—ever. The Syrian attitude must be the **opposite** of the Egyptians. While the Egyptians have a plan to let the Israelis come to them, take losses, and wait out the war—regardless of losses, the Syrians must take VPs and take them right now. The Egyptian plan is a losing one for the Syrians. There were testers who called it a day with 2 VPs while their “invading” army held up short of the Purple Line (i.e., still in Syria) and proceeded to go into PD. It took a team of players in Spain to see the alternative—which was hard for some to stomach.

The best plan for maximizing the control of VPs is what I call the “Syrian Bum's Rush.” Use all the tanks the Syrians have, hug the Israelis all over the place to reduce their freedom of action and get into as many engagements as possible (even though they are at poorer DRMs than you'd like—meaning your units might not be on their Deployed side—god forbid!—so you can move fast). Meanwhile, the Syrian Infantry advances a little looking for good terrain and stays out of the armored assault. Expect **lots** of losses. Your job is not to be *ready for later*, there is no later, but to snag as many VPs as you can right now!

By turn 3 or 4, this hyperactive time is over, you'll have to be content with what you have earned (doesn't matter if the Israelis retake the hexes later), and you'll need to pull back and prepare for the certain offensive the Israelis will begin to take the VPs they will want at the end of the game to counter what you now have in your pocket. Now is when you find out if you kept your infantry forces intact enough or not. Your initial armored force will have been shredded (historically, the tanks lost 90% and the infantry only a small percentage in this initial onslaught), but with enough dug-in infantry, you'll be able to make good use of the reinforcing armor units from Iraq, Jordan, and the minor allies to make the Israelis pay for their need to advance toward Damascus. You'll not be able to “stop” the Israelis, but you want to make it costly and not an easy matter for them to advance and take multiple VPs.

You might even convince the Egyptian turtle to come out of its shell to help distract the Israelis. The real Syrians did exactly that...proving the Egyptian's point!

Putting It Together. If one was to examine the two Arab war plans together, you'll find that for the first three turns, the Egyptians will do very little besides crossing the canal and installing their dense defensive shield around their bridging sites while the Syrians ignore losses, light their hair on fire, and give everything they have (on tracks, anyway) to secure more VPs before the good times end. By turn 4, the Syrians will have their high-water mark of VPs, devastated their armored force, and are in the process of pulling their infantry back a little to go into PD as well. Believe it or not, at this point the Arab war effort is going quite well. It requires not one, but two very different mindsets to play the Arabs as opposed to those seen in earlier *BCS* games.

Meanwhile, the Israelis have probably tried a few uncoordinated attacks against the Egyptians and got their vaunted armor bloodied in the process (complaining about how they "cannot attack at all"). In the Golan, they have been operating over the red line the entire period but are starting to breathe a little easier as the Syrian tank numbers drop and their infantry starts to dig in. And the whole time they are working to master the air war and how to best utilize the missions available (beating the Arabs in the air is no great accomplishment; doing so in the best way, with little loss, and the most CAS available you can manage is a feat worthy of pride).

For the next 5-6 turns, the Syrians will suffer a rapid Israeli offensive while the Sinai sits in an uncomfortable lull as the Israelis build up in preparation of a massive strike to cross the canal. Historically, during this period, the Syrians begged the Egyptians to "do something" that would cause the Israelis to relent in their offensive in the Golan (the historical Egyptians did so, in the form of a doomed armored offensive that rapidly collapsed with heavy losses—and the remaining Egyptians returned to their turtle positions).

Once the Israelis are prepared, there will be a knife strike attack to create a modest secure corridor allowing a canal crossing that will determine the winner in the Sinai. It won't be easy, for either side. Good luck!

The Israeli War Plan. Unlike the Arabs, the Israelis are very sensitive to losses of men and material (especially men). The Israeli nation could not afford extensive casualty lists at all, but especially so among the highly trained and proficient pilots in the IAF. On top of the cost of any loss, capturing the venerated IAF pilots after being shot down and subjecting them to torture was a coup of the first order allowing the Arab populations to vent their anger and frustration (hence the VPs for downing Israeli Air Units).

Suffice it to say, you don't want to run your war disregarding losses.

As a result, you'll have to enforce lulls on the fighting fronts in order to let the recovery operations function, to let the Arabs (ill-advisedly) come to you, and to build up your forces in order to make a massive canal crossing operation later in the war. So, running a lull thinking you should attrit the enemy as much as you can in attacks of minor purpose or reason (just to do something) is not wise. You might not end up with very high losses when the time comes to go into full power (though some would argue that any are too many), but when everything is ready for the big offensive and a number of Formations are FAT-3 or FAT-4, you are in trouble. Make sure that Lull means Lull. Within reason, sure you can use your artillery to pound Arab Formations—but it might be wiser to minimize on Fatigue and use the IAF instead.

Regardless, your plan should not be based on a "broad front attritional" campaign. Trying to kill off large chunks of Arab Infantry isn't going to do it. It didn't work in 1916, either. On top of that, you have another problem:

Balancing the Two Fronts. In the early days of the war, the Israelis should be content running a series of lulls in the Sinai so he can apply maximum effort on the Golan. Assuming the Syrian player doesn't throw you a bone by playing turtle, you should be dealing with a mad Syrian Bum's Rush. Your few small units will be inundated by Syrians going hell-bent-for-leather for VPs in those first turns. You will kill many of them, but at the same time, it will feel like you've never done enough.

Combined Arms? Never Heard of Her. Unlike every army shown in *BCS* until now, the Israelis are completely unimpressed with the concept of Combined Arms. Other than a handful of garrison units, Para troops, and exceptionally rare Dual units, one could say that if their exemplar armor units couldn't do the job, their attitude was that it didn't need to be done. In fact, this was a result of demographics more than anything else. The last thing the Israeli state could do was field multiple divisions of infantry with a smattering of armor as support. Forty or so men making up

an armor company with some 11 tanks is one thing, nearly 200 in an infantry company is another. In the brutal calculus involved, it was more manageable to produce more tank units and have them operate without any supporting arms—what infantry there was tended to be in highly trained parachute and commando type units (or assigned to heavily protected fixed garrison positions).

There are *BCS* players out there who will literally stop fighting the war if the enemy has support and they have none. Here, as the Israeli, they will not have a choice. They will either make do or lose. It really is that simple.

The Arabs on the other hand, have traditional support, but except for the Egyptian Sagers (which have their own requirements to be useful), the support is heavily out-gunned armor. In fact, so heavily out-gunned, it bumped up against the operating limits of the Engagement Table (hence the max +3, min -3 DRM effect—so the firer might be highly effective, but not invincible, which is not really a feature of reality).

The Air War. The main air war is decidedly in the favor of the Israelis, with more effective aircraft for a greater variety of tasks, as well as look as if they have more numbers due to the individual disparity between the air units of the two sides. To not spill the beans on the optimum numbers to be devoted to the different tasks at hand, I'll let the Israeli players out there determine their own goldilocks numbers—neither too many nor too few. The Arab air forces are simple (except for the couple of air units capable of **two** missions—be still my beating heart!); the only thing the air unit can do is... do what it does. With any luck, the Israelis will screw up how they run their missions, so you can slip in edgewise once in a while. In the main, the Arabs must resign themselves to taking the punishment.

The Canal Crossing. To win the game, at some point from 10 Oct or so, the Israelis will need to force a major canal crossing to sweep far and wide on the Egyptian side. If this is not done, and the Syrians obtain a good score during their three turns of Bum's Rush (before getting their head handed to them for the rest of the game), the Arabs are in a good spot to win the game. It will be competitive if the Israelis cross the canal and fan out as best they can. If they cross, and only manage a tight knot of units near the bridges, a win will be a lot harder. Trying to win early on via a sudden death is highly unlikely unless the Egyptians manage to forget to layout the suggested turtle defense and go for broke for a few VP hexes. All bets are off if the Egyptians have an amoeba defense, no PD, and no Sagers.

As the Israeli player, once across, move fast and have a clear idea of what you are doing back there. If your timing is good, there should not be much war left, so you need to work rapidly—be it SAM Controls, cutting off infantry division MSRs or what have you. Don't screw around.

The Israeli Repl rates seem too high. On both sides (pretty much), the "Replacements" given as Repls are misnomers at best. Neither side got much (if any) new equipment (tanks, missiles, artillery, aircraft) from the superpowers once the fighting started, though there were some (shown on the OOA) items (mostly aircraft) airlifted to Israel from the US once the shooting war began. Additional stockpiles in both side's home nations were all but nonexistent.

No, many of the Repls shown (including almost all the Israeli ones) are actually the result of battlefield recovery and repair operations. It's not a new Israeli tank step... it's the same one that was wiped out a turn earlier, with some baling wire and glue holding them together (just kidding), sent back to the front due to the superhuman efforts of recovery units and long-suffering vehicle maintenance teams. The Arabs in general were far less effective at both these less-than-glamorous tasks, so while they may have some recovered vehicles in their Repls, the percentage is nowhere near as high for them.

Naturally, on both sides, the non-AV Repls contain only a few lightly injured returning to the fight (the war is too short to recover from anything even mildly worse) and few newly trained troops (again, the war is too short). Instead, what you have is a hodge-podge of very lightly wounded (covered with rapidly applied bandages) with recently called-up reservists (young as well as old) who would either learn as they went or modify training from their 1967 or even 1956 experience. The Arabs supplemented these numbers with highly motivated, yet completely untrained "troops" who would attempt to utilize their zeal and both nationalistic and religious faith to overcome their lack of knowledge.