

Celles Melee has always been a sort of mystical scenario for me. I've been playing ASL since 1989, long enough to have opportunity to buy everything ever printed by anyone for ASL. The one exception to that is the "In Contact" scenario pack with Celles Melee. I've been going to tournaments since 1990, and I never once saw one of these scenarios. I've been reading the ASLML since the GENie days, however, and every now and then, someone would mention this pack, and the scenario I always remembered hearing about was Celles Melee. The association to Bill Connor made me that much more interested to see, and maybe own, the scenario pack.

When MMP printed Out Of The Attic last year, I finally was able to have a bunch of "In Contact" scenarios and Celles Melee. I bought it despite having several of the other scenarios, and all of the articles, in their original appearances. On, January 3 2004, my 47th birthday, I finally got to play Celles Melee.

Bruno L'Archeveque and I chose sides randomly by DR; I got the Germans. Fortunately, I had the unofficial errata from Perry that specifies that the Americans move first. As German, by SSR I wrote down my entry hexes without seeing Bruno's setup.

Bruno started with two stacks in woods (P8 and Q8) on the west of board 17, one stack in the R5 center building near the road, and two stacks further back in the W3 two hex building, but both on level zero. He entered four tanks on board 17 and two on 19. He remembered to put concealment markers on them, but he put turrets on some to be CE for the road movement rate. This gave away the 90L tanks (M36GMC) by their lack of turret counters. I'm aware of the rule allowing one to record CE status on setup, but this was past setup so I suppose the thing to do was put turret counters on the open top tanks to make them look like the rest. He put one M36 at the north end of board 19 in brush to keep his concealment. He moved a concealed tank to the east edge of board 19 at Y10. He moved a concealed tank from board 17 to the west edge of board 19, but with its CA partially blocked by the woods south of it. The other M36 drove along the main board 17 road to the crossroads where it nicely covered the remaining road. It could see right to the south board edge where I entered, but luckily for me, there are five orchard hexes to hinder any shots. By the MP expended, I could tell that a tank that ended up hull down behind the wall in the center of board 17 was a Stuart. Not far behind it was another concealed tank in motion.

On the 17A5 road, I had recorded a Pz 5, Pz4, Stg3, HT with 2 HS and HT with 10-2, 548 and LMG. The 19A5 road had a Pz 5, 2 Pz4, HT with 548 and PSK and HT with 8-0 and 548. I put on Pz 5 at the 19I10 hex just in case Bruno left me an opening to exploit, which was not the case.

The really tricky part for the German is when to play on the Panther's great armor. Only the M36 has a reasonable chance to kill it with AP, and then, only on a turret hit. The German player is forced to play the odds if he wants to accomplish anything. One mistake Bruno made was shooting at the Panthers sometimes when he could see that weaker tanks would be following them. The M36 covering the board 17 road forced my units to move off of the road fairly soon after entry, and to veer west. I sent the Pz 5 to the row O hedge and pointed the turret at the hull down, automatically unconcealed, Stuart. The Pz 4 ended up a couple of hexes south of that, pointing at an infantry stack in the east 17 woods. The Stg3 was adjacent, also pointing at an infantry stack in the east 17 woods. I held back the HTs, since the Stuart could easily kill them, to see if I could do anything with the other tanks from board 19 first. The Pz 5 successfully survived a hit from the M36 to move onto board 17 east, to threaten the hull down Stuart, which went into reverse motion. The two Pz 4 tanks drove up the woods road to threaten the one of the two American infantry stacks in the 17 west woods. The concealed tank at the east edge of 19 was a Sherman, which missed its shot at a Pz 4. I moved the tanks CE to limit their exposure and invoke case J1 or J2, and it helped. The HTs followed the Pz 4 into the woods. The first HT moved CE so it could unload the 548 and PSK near a Pz 4. It survived a long-range MG shot from the Sherman. The second HT moved BU to avoid the residual left by the MG shot at the first HT. Since the hull down Stuart was now in motion, I could safely bring on the board 17 HTs, but they too had to veer to the west. They stayed in motion, and the 10-2 HT was even BU. The last Pz 5 did not wish to trade shots with the ROF 2 M36 for an extended period of time, so upon entering it moved south and parked adjacent to the hedge south of the stone building where it could cover the flank of the rest of my forces, but hide from the M36 and Sherman.

Bruno did not take the Baz shot available against the Pz 4 in the west 19 woods, choosing instead to keep concealment and wait for a better shot. The AFPH was a pain for me. I'm shooting mostly just for acquisition, but I rolled the American SAN several times and activated the sniper twice. It recalled the two HTs in the west 19 woods.

Turn two was a reminder how the best laid plans can get royally screwed by lousy dice. Bruno moved the hull down Stuart west through the board 17 town, right in front of my Pz 5 to reach the row O east hedge and threaten the two HT there, as well as a side shot on the Pz 4 and Stg 3. The Pz 5 missed its only shot at the Stuart, which had case J2. Bruno moved a Sherman behind the M36 and moved a Stuart to shoot at one of the Pz 4 tanks in the west 19 woods road. He again surprised me by forgoing the Baz prep fire shot to retain concealment and move for a better shot. He moved up the Sherman along the east edge of board 19 for a shot at my loaded, recalled HT. The Sherman stayed out of the LOS of the Pz 5 on board 19. My defensive fire from two Pz 4 tanks broke that unit before it could shoot, which was the only good thing in that phase. On board 17, the Pz 4 pivoted west to shoot the Stuart at the row O hedge. It missed. The Stg3 pivoted to shoot the same target. It missed. I figured I'd get it in the next prep fire phase before it could do any damage; little did I know. The board 19 Sherman broke its gun on the AFPh shot. The hedge Stuart put an acquisition on the board 17 Pz 4. In the APh, Bruno positioned the remaining concealed unit for a Baz shot at a Pz 4 in the east 19 woods. He advanced a concealed stack in the 17W3 building to level 1.

In German turn 2, I start firing at the hedge Stuart. Perhaps I should have gone with the certain protection of smoking it, but I needed CVP to win, so I chose to shoot. Stg3 shoots and misses. Pz 4 shoots and misses. Stg3 intensive fires and misses. Pz 4 intensive fires and breaks the MA. Damn! This was an ACQUIRED target! In the east 19 woods, similar bad luck. One Pz 4 fires MGs at the threatening concealed stack, missing it. It must use its MA on the Stuart around 17U8. It misses that as well. The second Pz 4 fires MGs at the concealed stack, but only strips concealment to reveal an 8-0 with a Baz. It follows up with MA, at a range of two hexes, AND MISSES! I figure I'm going to lose those tanks in the DFPh. It's time for movement. I send the row O hedge Pz 5 after the Stuart, since only the Stuart will be able to shoot it. I try a point blank stopped bounding fire, but miss. I do, however, cause Bruno to use up the Stuart's shots unsuccessfully on the rear end of the Pz 5 as it returns to the German side of the hedge. I am able to move up one HT to unload the two HS to threaten the Stuart with PF. The other HT also moves up to unload the 10-2 group. On board 19, the recalled HTs exit; the loaded one unloads first. My Pz 5 on 19 risks allowing the M36 a shot to move from the east side to the west side of the board for a shot at the Sherman with a disabled MA. The shot had no effect. The other board 17 Pz 5 moves up to the row Q wall to threaten the 17U8 Stuart, and stay hull down to the R5 concealed stack. Amazingly, during the American fire of the DFPh, I do not lose any tanks! The Baz rolls a twelve, while the 17U8 Stuart misses. I can't believe it. We're both shooting terribly.

I have one HS try for a PF against the hedge Stuart during the AFPh. It gets one, but misses at a range of two. I fire the board 19 Pz 5 at the Sherman, which had failed its motion attempt, to get acquisition. The wall Pz 5 gets acquisition on the 17U8 Stuart, which still hopes to kill a Pz 4 before it dies, so it is not in motion. Sometime during this turn I believe, the American sniper wounds the 8-0 and breaks a squad.

In American turn 3, the hedge Stuart fires at the Pz 4, hits but has no effect. Intensive fire also had no effect. MGs against an adjacent German HS cause an MC, which the HS passes. The 17U8 Stuart also misses its shots at its acquired Pz 4. Unbelievable stuff! The M36 and Sherman on board 17 road hexes S5 and T5 are sort of stuck; Bruno decides to leave them there. The board 19 Sherman with malfunctioned MA tries for a smoke pot to cover its withdrawal, but misses. It expends a start MP. The Pz 5 fires. Another twelve! The Sherman moves merrily north post haste down the road. The M36 tries to capitalize on the situation and moves south towards the Pz 5 along that same road. Bruno moves the concealed stack in the 17R5 building west, to the 17S4 building. During the DFPh, the 10-2 directs a squad PF into the hedge Stuart and then holds a marshmallow roast by the blaze. The wall Pz 5 also kills the 17U8 Stuart, and I feel a little better now, thank you. In the AFPh, the board 19 M36 fires at the Pz 5 and - wait for it -, rolls a twelve.

The turns after that moved faster, so my memory is less detailed. In German turn 3, the two board 17 Panthers manage to gang up on the M36, and it can't get a turret hit and dies soon after. The board 17 Pz 4 repaired its MA and, with the Stg3, work to protect the Panthers from the Sherman behind the M36. The 10-3 group moved forward, but got shot up by said Sherman. I manage to keep the broken American units in the east 17 woods under DM constantly, so they never threaten again. The board 19 Panther disables its MA during the RPh, then exits south during the MPh. I send a Pz 4 from the west 19 woods to chase the M36 with malfunctioned MA. The other Pz 4 in that woods positions itself to smoke the 17W3 building.

In the following American turn, that M36 also dies. On German turn five, I feel like the clock is ticking, and I know I will need to exit many VP to win. I have about 30 CVP so far. A Sherman hiding at 19Y1 repairs its MA. On board 17, I send a Panther up the west side to challenge the Sherman at 17T5. Bruno tries the APCR shot; no APCR. He tries a DI shot; no luck there either. I move the other Pz 5 right by that Sherman to pick on the 19Y1 Sherman. It too has no luck shooting at the Panther. The Stg3 also moves in on the 17T5 Sherman. In the AFPh, both Panthers roll fives to hit, and kill, both Shermans. Bruno has left to him only two squads, one 9-1, one MMG and one Baz; they had been earlier forced to the rear by breaks and are not now in a threatening position. I have about 40 CVP. We figure that I can exit easily another 40 VP in the two turns remaining, so Bruno concedes.

In post game discussion, we agree that I was a bit optimistic with the German board 19 entries. Had Bruno moved up two or three tanks to the southern half of board 19, I could have been in trouble. It was a memorable game, perhaps for the wrong reasons (the dice), but I would try it again. It looks challenging to play either side.