

NAVAL WARGAME RULES

FOR THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

Mike Adams
September 2003

INTRODUCTION

These rules are based on “De Bellis Navalis” by Colin Standish, published in Wargames Illustrated #143 August 1999. “De Bellis Navalis” were themselves based on “De Bellis Antiquitatis” Ancients rules, published by Wargames Research Group.

The rules are intended for 1/2000 to 1/3000 scale models or counters.

LIST OF EQUIPMENT NEEDED

1. Scenario description
2. Rules
3. Fleets of ship models or counters
4. Playing surface, e.g. blue sheet
5. Measuring rule
6. Dice:
 - One Average Die
 - Two D6
7. Shell splashes or other hit markers
8. Smokescreen markers (e.g. cotton wool)
9. Critical hit markers
 - Movement
 - Gunnery
 - Control
10. Sunk ship models or counters
11. For some scenarios: minefield markers
12. For some scenarios: coastline, sandbanks, harbours, etc.

SHIP CLASSIFICATION

All vessels are classified into the following ship types:

| <i>Abbr.</i> | <i>Vessel</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|--------------|----------------------|---|
| DD | Destroyer | A collection of small torpedo armed vessels totalling 2000 tons between them. |
| CL | Cruiser, Light | Unarmoured vessels of less than 5000 tons armed with guns up to 6" calibre and possibly torpedoes. |
| CA | Cruiser, Armoured | Armoured vessels of approximately 10,000 tons and armed with 8" calibre main guns and 4" to 6" secondary batteries. |
| BB | Battleship | 10,000 to 15,000 ton armoured ships armed with 10" to 12" main guns and 6" secondary batteries. |

Cruisers and Battleships are collectively referred to as Capital Ships in the rules.

OBSOLETE SHIPS

Fleets may contain old, obsolete vessels that are usually slower and equipped with less effective ordnance than more modern ships of the same class. In such cases, the range of a ship's weapons should be reduced by 6" (to a minimum of 6") and its maximum speed reduced by 1".

SETTING UP

The scenario being played should determine how fleets are disposed at the start of battle. Alternatively, the player with the least number of fast warships can be considered "out-scouted" and is obliged to set up first and move first. Count 1 point for each Destroyer and Armoured Cruiser, and 2 points for each Light Cruiser. Add the score of 1D6. The player with the highest score out-scouts his opponent.

One Capital Ship in each fleet must be nominated as the flagship, and another Capital Ship nominated as the second-in-command, which will take the flag in the event of the flagship being sunk.

SEQUENCE OF PLAY

Play alternates between players. In each player's turn, follow the sequence below.

1. Roll for Command Points (CPs)
2. Use CPs to repair hits
3. Use CPs to manoeuvre ships and battle lines
4. Carry out compulsory movement, or use CPs to halt vessels
5. Non-active player fires
6. Active player fires
7. Active player removes hit markers from his own vessels

COMMAND POINTS

Each player rolls one Average Die (numbered 2,3,3,4,4,5) and subtracts 1, to give a result in the range 1 to 4. The score represents the number of Command Points (CPs) the player can use in the current turn to control his fleet.

Navies with poor leadership should roll one Average Die and subtract 2 for the number of Command Points, giving a result in the range 0 to 3.

If the flagship is sunk, the fleet permanently loses 1 CP from every roll and the flag passes to the second-in-command. If the second-in-command is also sunk, then the fleet is considered to have no flagship and all commands suffer the +1 CP penalty for being further than 18" from the flagship (see below).

Navies with fresh, highly trained and/or battle-experienced crews relative to their opponents add 1 CP to every roll.

CPs may be used to carry out the following actions:

- Turn a Capital Ship upto 90°
- Turn a single Destroyer or flotilla of Destroyers upto 180°
- Move directly forward at upto maximum speed
- Prevent a vessel from moving forward 3"
- Remove a hit marker
- Order a General Withdrawal (costs 2 CPs)
- Order a General Chase (costs 3 CPs)
- Lay a belt of mines (designated mine-layers only)
- Clear a belt of mines (mine-sweepers only)

Modifiers:

- To carry out an action for a vessel further than 18" from the flagship requires one additional CP (except for General Withdrawal and General Chase)

GENERAL WITHDRAWAL AND GENERAL CHASE

General Withdrawal implies that every ship in the fleet make best progress towards friendly port away from the battle, avoiding enemy and disregarding formation. Count each vessel as having 1 free CP to use for movement purposes only. Once the command for General Withdrawal is given, the player still dices for Command Points each turn, but can only use them to repair hits.

If the direction of withdrawal is not obvious from the scenario, then it should be agreed between the players at the start of the battle.

General Chase can only be issued by a fleet whose enemy is making a General Withdrawal. This is an order for every ship in the fleet to make best speed to chase down the enemy. Count each vessel as having 1 free CP to use for movement purposes only. Once the command for General Chase is given, the player still dices for Command Points each turn, but can only use them to repair hits.

MOVEMENT AND TURNING

If a player wishes to turn a vessel, he must do so before any forward movement and at a cost of one CP per vessel. Destroyers may turn up to 180° whilst other, larger vessels may only turn upto 90°.

Vessels may then be moved forward to their maximum move distance if desired at a cost of one CP, which represents periodic bursts of speed (consuming much larger quantities of fuel).

All remaining vessels that have not already moved must move directly forward 3", unless halted at a cost of one CP. Vessels in port or anchored remain halted for no cost.

The maximum speed of any vessel is:

| <i>Vessel</i> | <i>Speed</i> |
|---------------|--------------|
| DD | 8" |
| CL | 6" |
| CA | 6" |
| BB | 5" |

Where coal supplies are limited, maximum speed is reduced by 1".

Ships with foul bottoms, poor quality coal supplies or similar low levels of maintenance have their maximum speed reduced by 1". If this is true for the entire fleet, consider also reducing the mandatory cruise speed from 3" to 2".

BATTLE LINES

Vessels may manoeuvre as a single group if in a line astern formation. In this formation the lead ship manoeuvres (including bursts of speed as well as turns) and pays the appropriate CPs, but all following vessels in the group may manoeuvre at no cost provided they follow the ship in front and are capable of copying that lead vessel (e.g. a Battleship may not follow a Destroyer that makes a maximum speed move or a 180° turn).

Ships may join a battle line by manoeuvring onto the end of the line, as long as the appropriate CP cost is paid. Similarly, ships may leave a battle line or the battle line may split into two or more battle lines.

For the cost of one additional CP (i.e. 2 CPs in total), a battle line may turn from line astern to line abreast, or vice versa. Note that when in a line abreast formation, the only permitted group manoeuvre is back into line astern.

DESTROYER FLOTILLAS

Destroyers do not operate in battle lines but in flotillas, which are loose groups of Destroyers with each vessel within 1" of another. These can be manoeuvred like battle lines, i.e. only one Destroyer needs to be commanded to make an action and it will apply to the whole flotilla if desired. Likewise, flotillas can be split, joined or individual Destroyers can leave a flotilla, just like battle lines.

Destroyers can always trace a line of sight through other Destroyers within the same flotilla.

COLLISIONS

In any circumstances, if a ship's movement would take it into collision with another ship, the ship instead passes to one side.

GUNNERY

Gunnery is not simultaneous, instead each turn the non-active player will fire first, followed by the active player. Each vessel may fire in any direction at a target it can see, and make one attack (or support another vessel's attack) per Gunnery phase. Only one attack may be made against a single ship per Gunnery phase. All targets must be declared before the start of any firing.

In order to resolve an attack, each player rolls one die, adding the relevant vessel's combat factor (CF) and, in the case of the attacker, any attack modifiers.

If the firing player scores more than the defending player, the firing player scores a number of hits equal to the difference in the two scores. If the firing player's score is equal to or less than the defender's, no hits are scored to either vessel.

For example, a Russian Battleship (CF 4) fires on a Japanese Light Cruiser (CF 2). No modifiers apply. The Russian player rolls 4 and the Japanese player rolls 3. The Russian player scores $4 + 4 = 8$ and the Japanese player scores $2 + 3 = 5$. The Russian player wins by 3 and therefore scores 3 hits on the Japanese cruiser.

Combat factors and weapon ranges are as follows:

| <i>Vessel</i> | <i>CF</i> | <i>Range</i> | <i>Extreme Range</i> |
|---------------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|
| DD | 1 | 6" | - |
| CL | 2 | 12" | 18" |
| CA | 3 | 18" | 24" |
| BB | 4 | 18" | 24" |

Attack Modifiers:

- Add +1 for Japanese Capital Ships
- Add +1 at close range (<6")
- Subtract -2 at extreme range
- Add +1 if broadside on (see below)
- Add +1 for each vessel supporting the attacker (upto 2), except at extreme range
- Add +1 for each BB supporting the attacker (upto 2), except at extreme range
- Destroyers add +2 if attacking stationary targets

The range is measured from the nearest point between the two ships.

Line of sight (LOS) is traced from bow to bow of the attacking and target vessels. LOS is blocked if any part of any vessel intersects this line. However, the LOS of a

Capital Ship is not blocked by a Destroyer unless the owning player declares that the Destroyer is laying smoke BEFORE either player begins firing that turn.

BROADSIDES

Capital Ships firing broadsides of two batteries, fore and aft, count +1 CF as if supported by the second battery. To qualify for this modifier, the target must be within an arc of plus or minus 45 degrees from a line perpendicular to the firing ship, centred on the middle of the firing ship's broadside, and it must be possible to trace LOS not only from bow to bow but also from stern to stern.

SECONDARY GUN BATTERIES AND DESTROYERS

Armoured Cruisers and Battleships may ONLY fire their secondary armaments against Destroyers, counting the same as a Light Cruiser, i.e. CF 2 and range 12".

However, they may fire these batteries IN ADDITION to their main armaments which can simultaneously engage enemy Capital Ships. This is the only time a single vessel may make or support more than one attack in a phase.

LONG RANGE GUNNERY

Gunnery at extreme range is not permitted where ammunition is in limited supply or where there is a high sea state.

EFFECT OF HITS

For every hit scored on a target vessel, place a hit marker beside the vessel and dice to see if it is a critical hit. A critical hit is scored on the roll of any double on 2D6. See the table below for effect, except in the case of Destroyers which are sunk if they receive any critical hit. The result can be indicated by placing a small marker next to the ship model showing the type of damage, or in any other way the players agree.

| <i>Score</i> | <i>Result</i> | <i>Effect</i> |
|---------------|---------------|---|
| Double 1 or 2 | Movement | Permanently lose 2" from maximum speed |
| Double 3 or 4 | Gunnery | Permanently lose 1 CF (from all batteries) |
| Double 5 | Control | All actions for this vessel cost +1 CP to execute (including commands issued if this is the flagship) |
| Double 6 | Magazine | The ship explodes and sinks |

Hit markers prevent the vessel from firing or manoeuvring until the hit is repaired and the marker removed. The ship still makes its mandatory 3" move, unless the hit is a critical hit, in which case the ship is dead in the water.

Hit markers are removed at a cost of one CP each at the beginning of the player's turn, or automatically at no cost at the end of the player's turn.

If critical hits reduce a vessel's movement to 0" or its combat factor to 0 then the ship is assumed to have sunk.

SUNK SHIPS

If a ship sinks and there are friendly ships within 12", then one of these must be dispatched to pick up survivors. The rescue ship must be manoeuvred to within 1" of the sunk vessel. Thereafter the rescue ship remains stationary at the site for 2 turns (at no CP cost), after which it resumes normal operations. The rescue ship cannot fire while rescuing survivors.

Two Destroyers are needed to rescue survivors from a sunk Capital Ship.

STRIKING COLOURS

Where a ship is seriously outgunned, it will strike its colours and surrender to prevent unnecessary loss of life.

This will be the case if the combined CF of all undamaged enemy within 6" is three or more times the value of the vessel's own CF and there are no friendly vessels within 12".

One enemy vessel must manoeuvre alongside to take possession of the surrendering ship. The capturing vessel may be of any type, except Destroyers can only capture other Destroyers. Both vessels remain stationary and do not take any further part in the battle.

MINES

Mines may be laid during a game by ships designated able to do so, or may be placed upon the table before either fleet is deployed. If laid before the fleets are deployed, up to two dummy fields may be added to one genuine one. Fields should measure 1" by 4". It costs a mine-laying ship one CP to lay a belt of mines.

If a vessel moves into or across a genuine mine field, combat must be resolved immediately after movement has ended. Combat is resolved in the same way as shooting combat, except the minefield is "firing" and the ship is the target. Both mines and their target have a CF of 2 and hits upon the target automatically cripple (and double scores sink).

Ships may not attack mines unless equipped as mine-sweepers. Mine-sweepers may instead attack the mines first at a cost of one CP and with a CF of 4. If they “hit”, the minefield is cleared and removed. If they “miss”, the mine-sweeper is attacked by the mines, but retains its CF of 4.

If any vessel moves across a dummy minefield, the minefield is automatically removed.

WINNING AND LOSING

In the absence of scenario objectives, a fleet may be regarded as defeated if one quarter of its Battleships or Armoured Cruisers, or one quarter of the fleet as a whole, are crippled or sunk at the end of any one player’s turn. The minimum number of ships crippled or sunk must be two, i.e. a fleet cannot be defeated after losing just one ship.