The Battle of Midway
Coral Sea & Eastern Solomons

The History

January - June 1942

In the late spring of 1942 the Imperial Japanese Navy was full of pride. In the first six months of the Pacific war they had conquered most of Asia and Micronesia. There seemed no stopping the "Yellow Tide" as it was called in the United States. The Imperial War Machine began to have a lustful eye for the Western Pacific and even the west coast of North America.

The American Pacific Fleet had been nearly annihilated at Pearl Harbor and could muster little resistance to a Japanese offensive. Against the 11 Battleships of the Japanese Navy, the United States had none. Against the 12 Heavy Cruisers, 7. Light Cruisers: 9 to 1. And of the most powerful but yet unappreciated ships, the Japanese had 8 Aircraft Carriers to the United States' 4.

Nevertheless, the US carriers were a perpetual thorn in the Japanese Lion's side. At the Battle of Coral Sea in May, the US Carriers *Yorktown* and *Lexington* put two Japanese fleet carriers, *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*, out of action and sank the light carrier *Shoho*. The *Lexington* was lost, but the Japanese had suffered their first set-back and Port Moresby was saved from invasion.

June 1942

In an effort to crush the American carriers once and for all, Admiral Yamamoto assembled the largest fleet the world had ever seen and set sail for Midway Island, a morsel to eat before devouring the American fleet. His flagship was the gigantic *Yamato*, the largest Battleship ever built. Admiral Nagumo in the *Akagi* had command of four fleet Carriers and was looking forward to reducing Midway Island to a smoking seashell.

The future would have been grim for the Americans had not Admiral Nimitz's cryptographers been busy cracking the Japanese code. He knew the approximate location of the coming attack and deployed his three carriers and their escort ships north of Midway.

On the morning of June 3, 1942, a PBY Catalina from Midway sighted the Light Cruiser *Jintsu* and a high level bombing attack with B-17's was commenced. Not all the B-17's found the Jintsu but instead turned north. To their surprise they found Admiral Nagumo's four Aircraft Carriers and dropped 20,000 lbs. of bombs without scoring a single hit.

Nagumo armed all of his Mitsubishi 97 bombers with 500 lb. bombs and sent wave after wave to attack Midway Island. Midway somehow survived and Nagumo needed another attack to finish the job. He had no knowledge of the nearby American Carriers which were at that moment launching planes for his own *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Soryu*, and *Hiryu*. He ordered his reserve planes to rearm with bombs for Midway while the first attack squadron was still flying home. He had been saving these planes for any American ships that might have been discovered during the bombardment of Midway. That was a big mistake. Another fateful decision he made was to wait for the first wave to land and refuel before launching his second attack. Thus all of his planes were on deck being refueled and rearmed when the *Yorktown*'s torpedo and dive bombers poured out of the sky.

The *Akagi*, *Kaga*, and *Soryu* were reduced to burning hulks within minutes. Only the little *Hiryu* was missed in the thunderous assault and could launch planes. This she did, and the pilots followed the returning American planes home to the *Yorktown*. The *Yorktown* with only two Cruisers for support fell prey to three 500 lb. bombs and was slowed from 21 to 6 knots. The *Enterprise* launched her four remaining Douglass SBD Dauntless dive bombers for the *Hiryu*. By some miracle, all four found the *Hiryu* and scored hits. The *Hiryu* had to be scuttled, and her captain committed Hara-Kiri.

The *Yorktown* was hit by two aerial torpedoes by another squadron from the *Hiryu* and started to list severely. Admiral Fletcher ordered his crew to abandon ship but the *Yorktown* refused to sink. He sent salvage crews on board and ordered a tug from Pearl Harbor to tow the *Yorktown* to port. The Americans would have won a tremendous victory at Midway instead of their merely astounding victory had not a submarine torpedoed the listing *Yorktown* and sent her to the bottom. As it was, Yamamoto was struck a monumental blow. He realized even the Godzilla *Yamato* was defenseless without air cover. He turned his fleet back to Japan to face the wrath of the Emperor.

June - September 1942

In the months after Midway the United States brought the carriers *Wasp* and

Saratoga out to the Pacific and refloated some old battleships from the mud of Pearl Harbor. The Japanese concentrated on establishing bases in the Solomon Islands in order to cut the supply line between the U.S. and Australia. A number of naval skirmishes took place as the Americans attacked the never ending stream of Japanese transports headed for Guadalcanal and other islands in the "slot." During the Battle of the Eastern Solomons a major Japanese force including the *Yamato* prepared to do battle, but after the loss of the *Ryujo*, the Japanese fleet turned back.

September 1942 - August 1945

The United States built a formidable Navy in the next three years composed of many battleships and over one hundred fleet and light carriers. The largest sea battle of the war was fought in the Philippines at Leyte Gulf in 1944. The *Yamato*'s sister ship, the *Musashi*, was torpedoed 12 times by carrier planes and sent to the bottom. The *Enterprise* was the only American carrier from the original four to survive the entire war. She fought in every major battle from Midway to Leyte Gulf. "Haul ass with Halsey," was the old war cry.

The Game

When you play **Midway**, **Coral Sea**, or **Eastern Solomons**, you are in command of a ship that can move, fire its big guns, and fire its anti-aircraft guns. If you have chosen an Aircraft Carrier, you will have fighters, torpedo bombers, and dive bombers to launch. If you have chosen a fortress, you can do all of the above except move.

The screen is divided into three main areas. The left, and largest area, is an overview of the ocean. The upper right area is a scrolling text box used to prompt for input and to post messages about the battle. The bottom right area contains status information on your ship or the ship you are scanning.

Commands are issued as single keystrokes, but they often prompt for more information. Each command takes one turn. Time does not advance unless commands are issued. Hitting the space bar, or any other unrecognized key, will be considered a null command and will use one turn.

Launching Planes

   c: Launch Combat Air Patrol

You can send as many fighters as you like on patrol around the ship. When your ship is attacked, they will take a big bite out of the attackers before they get you.

f: Launch Fighters

It is a good idea to send fighter cover first when launching an attack on an enemy carrier, otherwise next to nothing will get through her CAP. When you launch fighters you will be asked, "Target? ", at which point you type the name of the enemy ship you wish to attack. Fighters have a slightly shorter range than other planes.

b: Launch Dive Bombers

Bombers are very accurate weapons but usually suffer considerable anti-aircraft losses. When they reach their target, they drop bombs which have a 50/50 chance of doing damage. Dive bombers have no defense against fighters.

t: Launch Torpedo Bombers

Torpedo Bombers are relatively imprecise weapons but suffer less from anti-aircraft fire because they drop their torpedoes from a distance. Torpedo Planes have rear gunners who can shoot down an attacking fighter now and then.

s: Launch Scout

Scout planes are the eyes of the fleet. They spot the bad guys before they spot you. It is necessary to spot a target before you can attack it! Scout planes subtract from your Torpedo Planes. When launching scout planes, you will be asked for a course. You should respond by typing a number from 0 to 360, where 0 is north and 90 is east, etc. Only increments of 45

degrees are significant.

@: Launch Random Scouts

You can send as many scouts as you like on random
scouting missions. They fly a random walk, usually
remaining close to their ship. Random scouts are useful
to keep enemies from sneaking up on you.

Recovering Planes

r: Recall Planes

If you decide that it would be better to break radio
silence than to let your planes fly on their way, you
can signal them to return home with this command.

Surviving planes come back automatically after attacking their target.
If their mother ship has been sunk, they will try to land at a nearby base.
If they run out of gas they will splash into the ocean.

Shooting down planes

If you think the bad guys are getting a little too close, you can fire your
anti-aircraft guns with the direction keys

```
yu   k   io
  \  |  /
h - + - l
  /  |  \
nm   j   ,.
```

Anti-aircraft bursts are shown as '*'s. Bursts that destroy planes are
shown as '@'s.

Example:
```
         +
        +@ A hit!
   ^       +
   |        +
   |       +   * A miss!
  |||
```

Some ships have more anti-aircraft guns than others.

Movement

Ships move at the rate of one square per turn. One square is approximately equal to one nautical mile. Scout planes move a fast 15 squares per turn, and heavy attack planes lumber along at 10 squares per turn. Scout planes discover enemy ships if they fly within 50 squares of one. Attacking planes will do the same if within 30 squares. Ships don't spot each other until they are 25 squares apart. It's a big ocean out there!

To steer your ship, use the direction keys:

```
YU   K   IO
  \  |  /
H -  +  - L
  /  |  \
NM   J   <>
```

Flagships

The first ship in each task force is the flagship. All the other ships follow it around. A nice reason to play one is that if you get sunk, you can transfer your flag to the next ship in the task force. A not-so-nice reason is that enemies shoot at flagships first.

Firing Guns

Fortresses, Battleships, Cruisers and some Carriers have big guns that can be used against other surface vessels. To fire your guns, type a carriage return. If there is an enemy ship within range (25 squares), he will feel your teeth.

Scanning

If you want to look at another ship and watch it sink or gauge its strength, type 'S'. It will ask you for the ship's name. The data at the bottom of the screen as well as the display will show the scanned ship's current status.

Waiting

If you think the battle is going slowly, type a 'w' to put the game into automatic mode. Your ship will continue on its present course and the game will progress rather quickly until until something happens. That something is usually a message appearing in the text box, but if things are really slow the wait will terminate after 24 hours (of game time). The ocean view is not updated during waits, and often doesn't reflect the current state of affairs when the wait terminates, so it is handy to hit the space bar to let a turn pass and have the screen updated. If no enemies are left, waiting will no longer work, and instead you'll get a message saying "No enemies left!"

Ending the Game

The games ends when you get sunk, choose not to transfer your flag, or quit. If you transfer your flag, you forfeit whatever points you had on the sinking ship. You may gain points, however, if the ship you transfer to has been successful. The game does not end when all enemies have been sunk. This allows you to take a victory sail or two around the various islands before quitting. **Midway** has two islands and a reef to explore. **Coral Sea** and **Eastern Solomons** have over a hundred islands, which requires intricate navigation at times.

Ocean Overview

The ocean view has 10 different levels of magnification, 0-9. Each higher scale shows more ocean but with less resolution. Scale 0 shows things as they really are, one space on the screen is one square wide. At scale 9, one space on the screen is 200 squares wide. All ship's names are visible at scales 1, 2, and 3. Only flagships are shown at scales over 3. Individual airplanes are shown at scale 0. At higher scales only airplane squadrons are shown. At scales above 3, only airplane squadrons from sighted ships are shown. At lower scales all airplane squadrons are shown. This lets you see planes sneaking up on you.

The current scale is shown as a number from 0 to 9 to the left of your ship's name in the Status Display.

Status Display

The status display gives your ship's name, the current game time, how many

guns and armor your ship has, and its class. Below that are some statistics for your ship or the ship you are currently scanning. These are how many bomb or shell hits the ship has left under the label 'hits,' the number of torpedo hits it has left under the label 'torps,' the ship's points (for sinking enemy ships), and her row, col coordinates.

To the left of these statistics is an image of your ship showing its current course. It is normally boxed by '|' characters. If any enemy aircraft visible in the ocean view are heading for your ship, your ship's image will be boxed by '#' characters.

<u>Quick Reference Command List</u>

h **l** **j** **k** **i o** **. ,** **n m** **y u**	Anti-Aircraft Guns
H **L** **J** **K** **I O** **< >** **N M** **Y U**	Movement
<return>	Main Guns
s **c** **t** **f** **b** **@**	Launch Aircraft
r	Recover Aircraft
0-9	Scale Ocean View
w	Wait
S	Scan
q	Quit

Game Pieces

+	American planes
-	Japanese planes
?	friendly scout planes
*	anti-aircraft explosions (miss)
@	anti-aircraft explosions (hit)
^	shell splash (miss)
#	bomb, shell or torpedo explosions (hit)
.	unexploded torpedo

Ship Shapes & Statistics

```
  ^           -/           Carriers: 7000 to 27000 tons
 /+\        /++|      /--\
 |+I        /++//     |+++>    Aircraft: 24 to 78
 |+I        |+//      \--/     Guns: 0 to 3
 \_/         -                 AA: 2 to 4



   ^            /            Battleships: 29000 to 73000 tons
   |          //      /--
  |||        ////    ---->    Aircraft: 1 to 3
 ||||||      ///     \--      Guns: 7 to 10
 \||||/      \//              AA: 2 to 3



   ^                        Heavy Cruisers: 9000 to 10000 tons
   |          /       -
   |         /      ---->    Aircraft: 1 to 3
  |||       //        -      Guns: 3 to 4
   |        //              AA: 1 to 3



   ^           '            Light Cruisers: 5000 to 6000 tons
   |          /       -->
   |         /               Guns: 1 to 2
                             AA: 1
```

```
 xxxx                          Fortresses: 20000 to 250000 tons
x\-/x
x|o|x                          Aircraft: 20 to 90
x/-\x                          Guns: 3 to 5
xxxxx                          AA: 3 to 10
```

Bibliography

The following books are an excellent source of information on the Pacific War. Let us not forget all those who have died so that we may live.

Dull, Paul S. *A Battle History of The Imperial Japanese Navy (1941-1945)*. Annapolis: U. S. Naval Institute Press, 1978.
Morrison, Wilbur H. *Above and Beyond: 1941-1945*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983.
Jane's Fighting Ships of World War II. New York: Military Press, 1989.

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