

## **After-Action Report: *Race to the Meuse***

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This is an after-action report of a solitaire play-through of the first scenario, “Strike from Humain.”

*Race to the Meuse* was published by Worldwide Wargames in *Wargamer* magazine in 1983. It covers the German attempt to cross the Meuse River in the Battle of the Bulge, December 23-27, 1944. This is an operational game at the battalion or *kampfgruppe* level, with some company-level units. An unusual, and perhaps unique, feature (for an operational game) is that the design uses incremental operations within a player-turn framework. Units have a task point allowance which allows them to move and fight in any order. During the player’s turn, units perform actions in the order of whichever ones have expended the fewest task points thus far. In order to participate in combat, all units have to have expended the same number of task points. For example, if one wants to assemble a force to perform an assault, units already in position will have to burn up task points waiting for other units to arrive. Even though these units have not moved, they will not be able to use those task points for exploitation movement after the combat. Thus, the system simulates the time needed for movement and combat but allows the activities to be intermixed within a turn.

This is not a complete incremental design, because it still uses player-turns. The nonphasing player’s units do not move or fight simultaneously with the phasing player’s. However, combat results can impose task point expenditures on defending units, which limits their abilities in the following player-turn.

An important special rule is that the German player must roll a die for each of his divisions to see how many mechanized *kampfgruppen* receive fuel each turn. Units without fuel pay considerably more task points for most actions. The fuel supply gets worse beginning with Turn 5 (the night of December 23).

Victory is based on a point system, including awards for holding geographic objectives, eliminating units and German units exiting the map to the west. Geographic awards are accumulated on a turn-by-turn basis, not simply at the end of the game.

The picture below shows the situation at start. The German *2nd Panzer Division* on the road in the vicinity of Humain with the front wide open for a drive on the Meuse crossings near Dinant. The crossings are defended by company-size units from the British 3rd Royal Tank Regiment. To the northeast are elements of the US 84th Infantry division, with one battalion and a few scattered outposts to the southwest. The 82nd Armored Cavalry from the US 2nd Armored Division is in garrison at Ciney in the north. All of the Allied units are inactive, performing garrison duties, and they cannot take any actions until activated by game turns or the approach of German units.

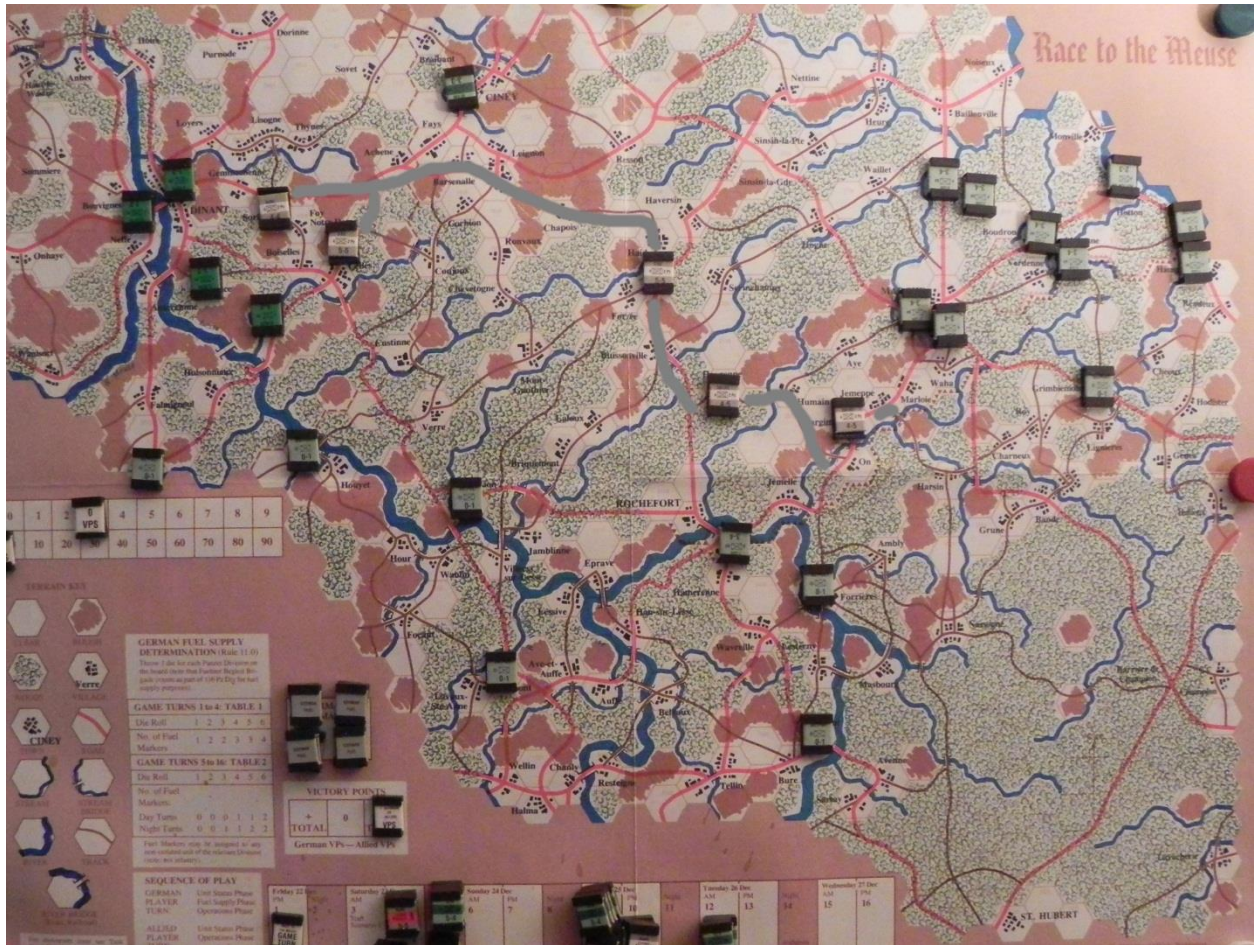


Start of Scenario

### Turn 3 (AM, December 23)

(Note that this scenario starts on Turn 3.) Since the game is called "Race to the Meuse" and not "Putz around in the Ardennes," the plan is for *2nd Panzer* to drive hell-for-leather on Dinant before the 84th Infantry activates or U.S. reinforcements arrive. However, they have a bad fuel roll and can only gas up two units. The first two make their dash, while the others struggle to follow as best they can. No Allied units are activated, and so there is no Allied player-turn.

Although the Germans get a few VP for passing through some towns in their dash, the Allies hold most of the objectives, and turn ends with a VP total of -3 (i.e., in the Allies' favor).



Turn 3: 2nd Panzer advances on Dinant



Turn 3: The armored spearhead

#### Turn 4 (PM, December 23)

The Germans get reinforcements in the form of three units from *Panzer Lehr* and three from *116th Panzer*. The fuel situation is pretty good: *2nd Panzer* gets 4 fuel counters, *Lehr* gets 2, and *116th Panzer* gets 3. The lead elements of *2nd Panzer* assault the British unit in Dinant and push it across the river. Two of the following units move southwest to seal off any flanking moves by the now-activated British, while the third positions itself to screen against enemy attacks from the north. *Panzer Lehr* enters from the south and snakes its way up the road, reaching the vicinity of Humain, with one unfueled unit straggling well behind. *116th Panzer* enters from the east but is stymied by the tough resistance of the U.S. outpost in Grimbiemont. They burn up their task points with the three assaults they need to take the town.

The British units are now activated. They are in a difficult position. As the German attacks demonstrated, they can't do more than delay concentrated attacks, and there aren't enough of them to screen all the bridges. C/3RTR pulls out of Drehance and slips past the Germans to relieve D/3TR at Bouvignes, which in turn moves north to Houx. B/3RTR moves by road across the Lesse and then to Anseremme in order to keep the enemy from crossing the bridge at that town. A/3RTR stays put in Bouvignes, providing the tiny amount of concentration that the British force can afford.

With the Germans in control of Dinant and Celles, the VP's start to rack up. The total is now 14 in their favor.



Turn 04 Overview



Turn 04 2nd Panzer Advances



Turn 4 British Response

## Turn 5 (Night, December 23)

During night turns, units have only 12 task points instead of 16, and mechanized units are penalized on the attack. Turn 5 marks the switch to a new (stingier) fuel table, although night turns are slightly more generous than day turns. *2nd Panzer* and *Panzer Lehr* each get only a single fuel counter, while *116th Panzer* gets none at all. Two more *116th Panzer* kampfguppen arrive.

*2nd Panzer* uses its fuel to move a kampfguppe across the Lesse at Hulsonniaux in order to approach Ansereremme from the south, while a second approached from the east. The two kampfguppen in Dinant stack in preparation for an attack across the Meuse into Bouvignes. The division's fifth kampfguppe stays at Achene in order to keep an eye on the back door.

*Panzer Lehr* uses its fuel to speed up its lagging kampfguppe. The others move west as best they can. They can either turn south to threaten Rochefort or north to screen *2nd Panzer's* line of communications against 2nd Armored, which will begin arriving this turn.

Give its lack of mobility, *116 Panzer* begins to develop an attack towards Hotton, in the teeth of the 84th Infantry's sector.



German Turn 5



CCA of 2nd Armor arrives. They move to block *2nd Panzer's* supply line, occupying Buissonville, Serinchamps, and Leignon. 84th Infantry is also activated. They send one battalion to reinforce Hampteau and another to occupy Verdenne. That leaves one battalion in reserve, just east of Waillet. British B/3 RTR withdraws across the Meuse to Neffe rather than face a two-pronged attack by *2nd Panzer*.

VPs accumulate to 47.

#### Turn 6 (AM, December 24)

The *2nd Panzer* spearhead is isolated by the actions of 2nd Armor. *Panzer Lehr* gets one fuel chit; the other formations get none.

Despite its isolation, *2nd Panzer* tries to force the Meuse bridges at Dinant and Anseremme. The latter results in an enraged result, while the units attacking from Dinant have to retreat from the town. The plucky British squadrons advance across the bridge to re-occupy Dinant. In both attacks, the defending British are penalized 3 task points. The one unit at Achene moves to Barsenalle in order to put the 2nd Armored unit at Leignon in its ZoC, which will force it to burn up TP if it wants to maneuver in the next turn.

*Panzer Lehr* needs to mount an attack on Buissonville to open up the supply route to *2nd Panzer*. However, without fuel, they don't have the task points to get into position and then attack this turn. They content themselves with setting it up for next time.

*Panzer Lehr's* concentration at Buissonville leaves it open to a thrust from Marche that could isolate it in turn. To counter this, *116th Panzer's* recon unit is ordered to interdict the road and track leading west from Marche. However, without fuel, the best it can do is move overland to just south of Waha. This puts the road in its ZoC but leaves the track open. Further to the east, two units of *116th Panzer's 60 KG* launch an attack on the infantry holding Marenne. The Americans are pushed back into Boudron. The division's *156 KG* is too weak to attack the reinforced units at Hampteau and so holds its position.

In the Allied player-turn, 2/234 of 84th Infantry takes advantage of the hole in the German screen and occupies Humain, thus isolating *Panzer Lehr*. 3/335, which had been in reserve south of Waillet, moves into Marche. 2/235 pulls out of Verdenne and joins 3/333 at Boudron in order to present *60 KG* with a more substantial obstacle. Meanwhile, the unit of 2nd Armor's CCA that had been holding Serinchamps makes a long trek to occupy Celles, thus depriving the Germans of more victory points and putting a double-lock on *2nd Panzer's* isolation.

The Germans accumulate no VP, and the total drops to 41 in their favor.



End of Turn 6

Turn 7 (PM, December 24)

Both *2nd Panzer* and *Panzer Lehr* are isolated now. The former's fuel roll comes up zero, but the latter's would have awarded them two units (the maximum), if they weren't isolated. I decide to use the optional air dropped supply rule in order to get some fuel to *Panzer Lehr*, but that die roll fails. Meanwhile, *116th Panzer* gets one fuel unit.

*Panzer Lehr* falls back from Buissonville. Two units move adjacent to Humain but don't have enough task points remaining to attack. The other moves south in the direction of Rochefort, to a position where it could be close enough to an unblocked road to be in supply next turn.

*116th Panzer* abandons its drive on Hotton in order to safeguard the supply road from further incursions. It uses its fuel chit to shift one *60 KG* unit to just south and west of Humain. The recon unit enters Waha to block further incursions from Marche.

The two *2nd Panzer* units near Dinant pull back to Sorinnes, looking for a chance to break 2nd Armored's lock on the road net. However, the two units at Anseremme fight their way across the Meuse into Neffe.

The Allies are not strong enough to mount any attacks (defense strength is not diminished by isolation). They keep their positions, holding the door closed on German supply lines. Two battalions of the 334th Infantry move out of Marche into the rough terrain northeast of Jemenne and thus block the road too far east for *Panzer Lehr* to trace supply in the next turn. The two remaining battalions of the 335th Infantry occupy Marche to replace the 334th. Further east, the

333rd Infantry gets more aggressive, occupying Cheox and Hodister in order to keep *116th Panzer* worried about its own supplies.

The Germans are really hurting for victory points now. The total stands at -47.



End Turn 7

### Turn 8 (Night, December 24)

The only German division that has units that are not isolated is *116 Panzer*. It receives 2 fuel units, the maximum. Since this is a night turn, the optional air supply rule is not applicable.

*2nd Panzer* decides that, isolated or not, it will continue its drive to the west. The units in Neffe assault the British in the rough terrain to the northwest. They are repulsed but have enough task points to re-occupy Neffe after first retreating. The two units in Sorrinnes move into position to attack the British in Dinant, but they don't have enough task points to mount the attack this turn. The rearguard in Barsenalle moves the maximum of two hexes west to Achene.

Two kampfguppen of *Panzer Lehr* join one from *116 Panzer* in an attack on the infantry in Humain, but they are repulsed. The other kampfgroup of *Panzer Lehr* moves southeast in an attempt to regain supply. The two kampfguppen of the *156th Panzer Regiment (116 Panzer Division)* split into their infantry and armor components in order to stretch their line and constitute a tiny reserve. One kampfgroup of *60th Panzer Regiment* occupies Jemeppe to safeguard the supply road to *Panzer Lehr*.

While the Germans are certainly hurting, the Allies don't have much strength to take advantage of the situation. The 333rd Infantry attack the split Kampfgruppe units in the east and drive them out of Genes and Grimbiemont. A more important attack by the 334th fails to take Jemeppe, which means that Panzer Lehr will be in supply next turn. One unit of CCA, 2nd Armor, moves southeast from Buissonville to link up with the infantry Humain and interfere with German attempts to push northwest across the stream.

In the northwest, the American units do an end-run around the German rearguard in order to provide help to the British on Meuse. A joint attack by another CCA task force and the two British companies in Dinant forces a German Kampfgruppe to retreat, but it is saved from loss by the presence of its companion unit on its retreat route.



End Turn 8

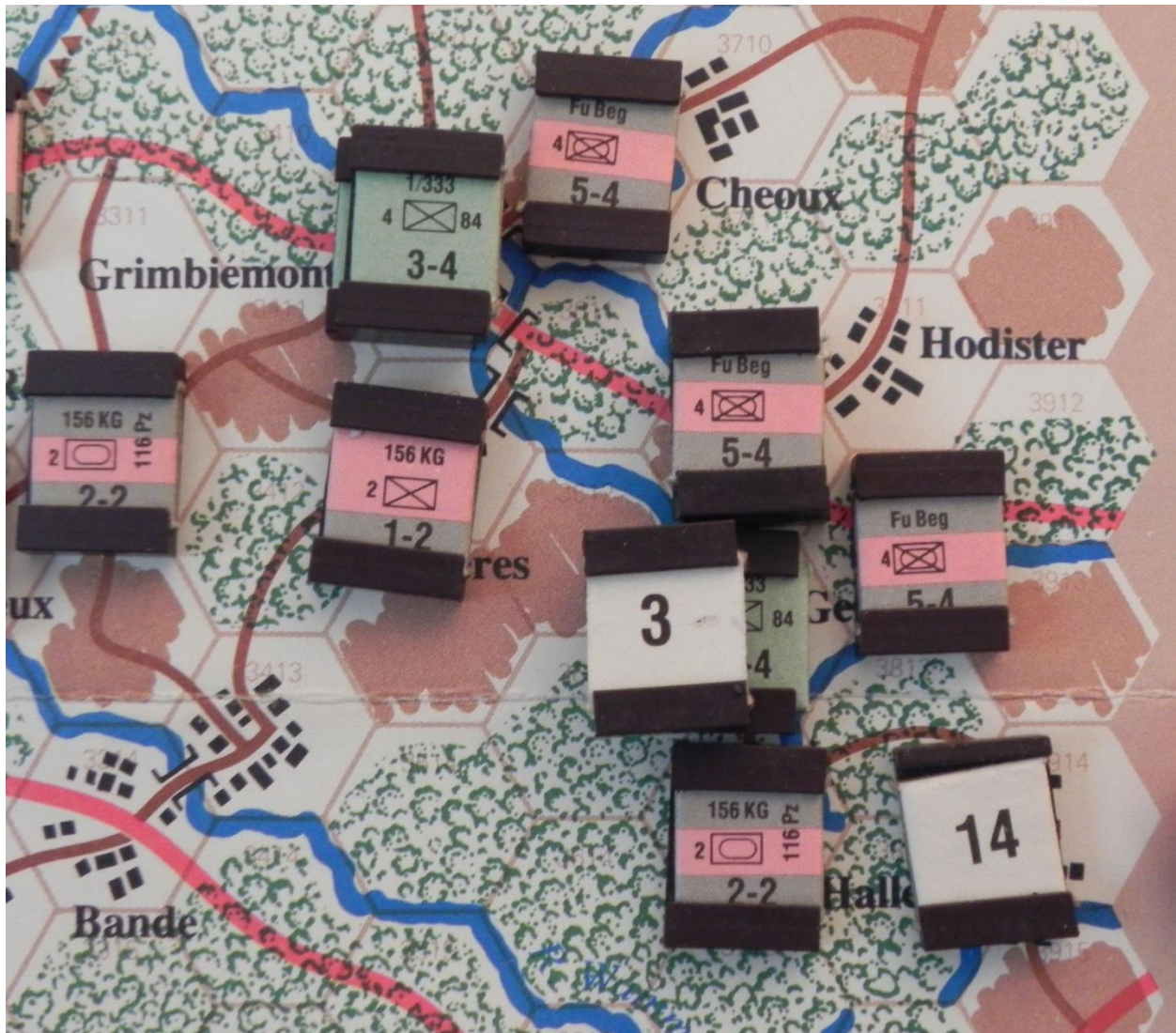
### Turn 9 (AM, December 25)

*2nd Panzer* and *116th Panzer* each get a fuel unit, but *Panzer Lehr* gets none. *2nd Panzer* can't use its fuel because all units are isolated and the airdrop attempt fails. *116th Panzer* assigns its fuel to one of the *Fuhrer Begleit* units arriving as reinforcements.

Isolated as it is, there isn't a lot that *2nd Panzer* can do. However, the units in Neffe continue to batter against 3/B/RTR, which gives ground slowly, allowing the Germans to advance one more hex towards the edge of the board. The units outside Dinant withdraw northwards to Loyers, from which one of them moves southwest in order to threaten the British in Dinant from another

direction. The unit in Achene holds its position in order to block the road to American reinforcements.

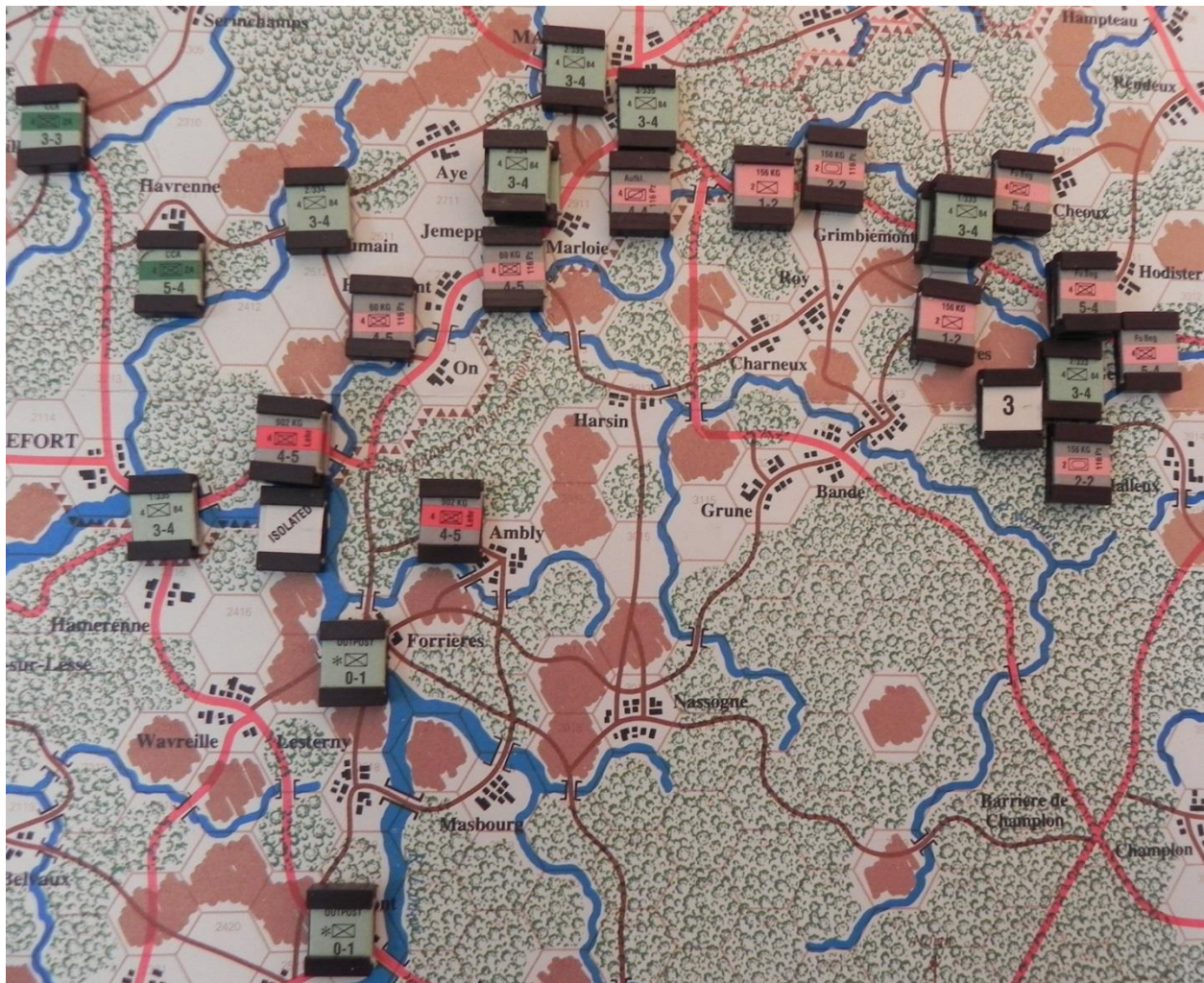
Entering from the northeast, *Fuhrer Begleit* slams into the rear of the 333rd Infantry Regiment. 2/333 in Genes is hit by two kampfguppen plus an armored component of *116th Panzer*. However, they luck out with an engaged result. The other unit of *Fuhrer Begleit* moves through Cheoux and isolates the two battalions of the 333rd in Grimbiemont. Thus, the entire regiment is now isolated in two villages.



Turn 9: *Furher Belgeit* arrives

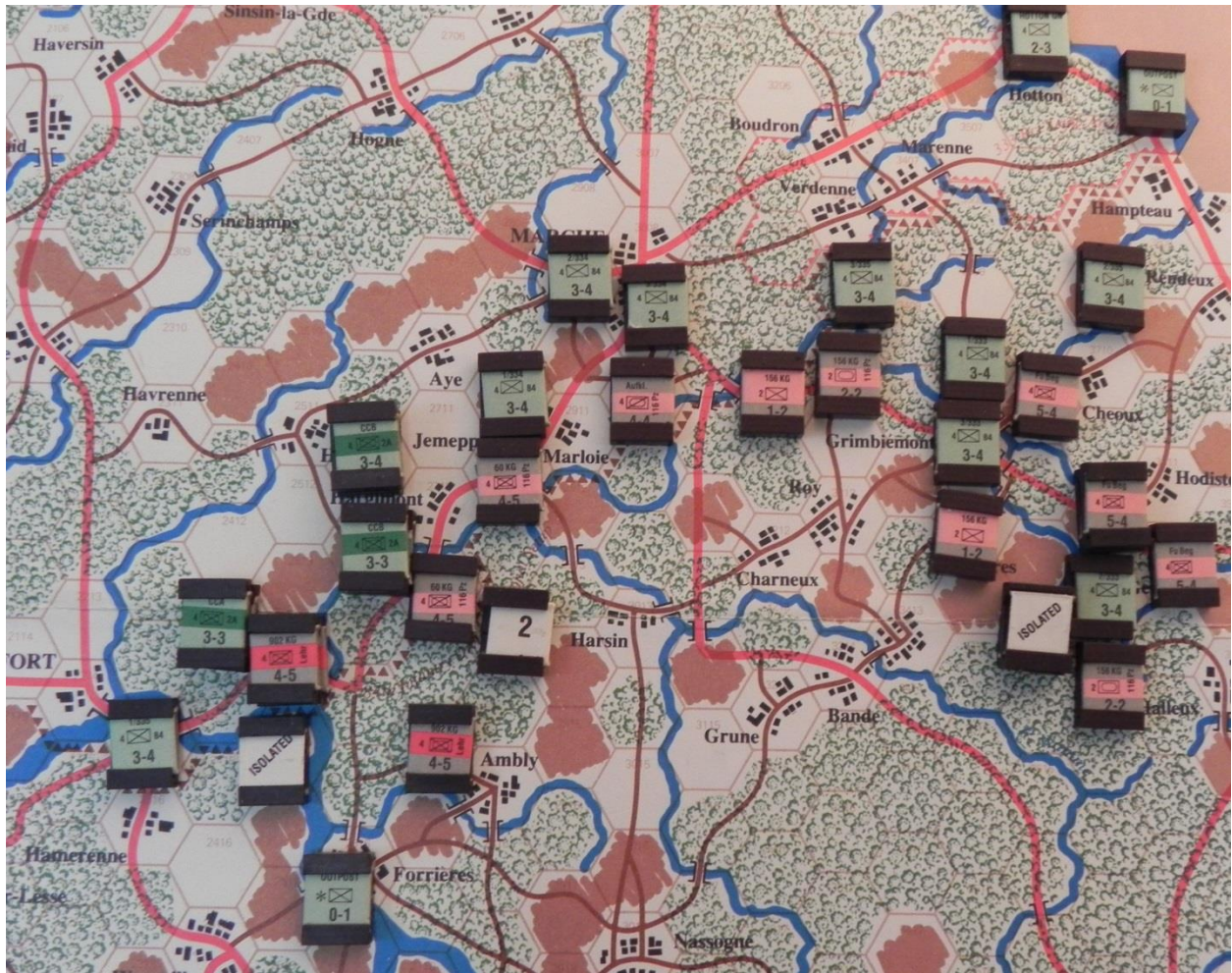
One *Panzer Lehr* unit is now able to trace an overland supply route around the ZoC of the outpost at Forrieres. It moves to the north of that village and assaults the outpost, in order to remove that impediment once and for all. However, the attack is repelled, and the kampfguppe is forced to retreat. Meanwhile, the two isolated *Panzer Lehr* units withdraw to Jemelle, where they will be able to reestablish supply next turn.

*116th Panzer* is stretched pretty thin just holding a line that can't be infiltrated by the Americans. After repeatedly being isolated, they are not sticking out their necks until *Panzer Lehr* can turn its attention westward again.



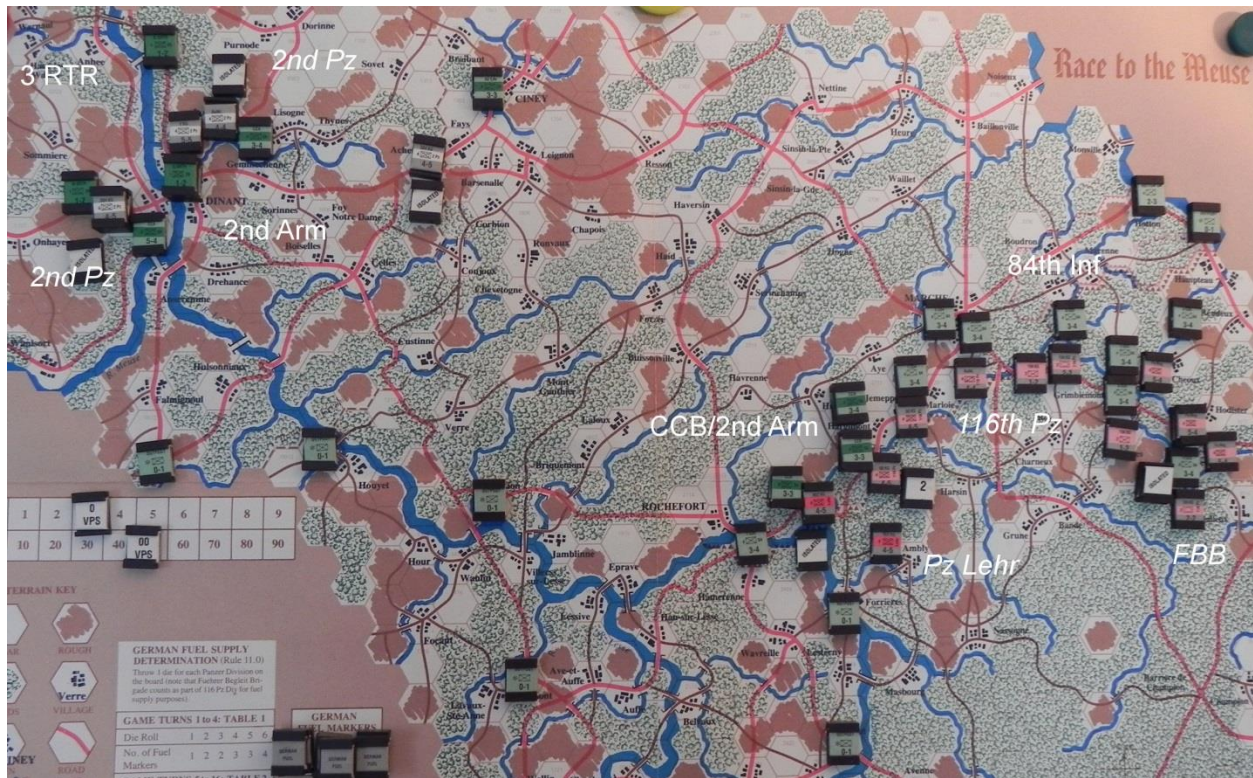
Turn 9: Southeast at end of German turn.

The Americans get CCB of 2nd Armored. Reasoning that *2nd Panzer* isn't going to make much progress until its supply lines are restored, the reinforcements are committed to the battle to the east. They attack the *116th Panzer* unit just northwest of On, forcing it back into the village. The elements of CCA on that side of the map chase after the retreating units of *Panzer Lehr* so as to keep them in an enemy ZoC. The arrival of CCB allows 84th Infantry to shift its 335th Regiment east to support the beleaguered 33rd, while the 334th takes over garrison duties in Marche.



Turn 9: CCB arrives.

Over by the Meuse, the other elements of CCA keep a tight ring around the *2nd Panzer* units but do not attack.



Turn 9: End

German Victory Points: -59

Turn 10 (PM, December 25)

116th Panzer gets a fuel unit. It is again assigned to one of the *Fuhrer Belgeit* units, as they seem to have the best scope for maneuver. No other divisions get any fuel.

9th Panzer (three units) arrives as a reinforcement on the road just south of Champion. Without fuel, they trundle up the road, intending to oppose CCB's new offensive.

Two *Fuhrer Belgeit* units pull out of their positions in order to attack 2/335 Infantry northwest of Rendeux, which is trying to threaten their supply line. However, the result is "engaged."

All of *Panzer Lehr* is in supply, albeit without fuel. Leaving one unit to hold Jemelle against CCA, the other two units renew the attack on Forrieres. This time they succeed in eliminating the outpost. This gives them a little more room to route supplies forward.

116th Panzer holds positions, except that one of split kampfgruppe pulls back to vicinity of Roy to avoid being enveloped by 84th Infantry units.

2nd Panzer is pretty stuck now. The units across the Meuse cannot continue to bull their way through the British armored company, because they would also have to attack the CCA unit behind them. They are also surrounded by ZoCs and so cannot move. The two units north of Dinant are also too weak to attack the two British companies in the town. They painfully exfiltrate to the northeast, while the unit that has been holding the blocking position at Achene



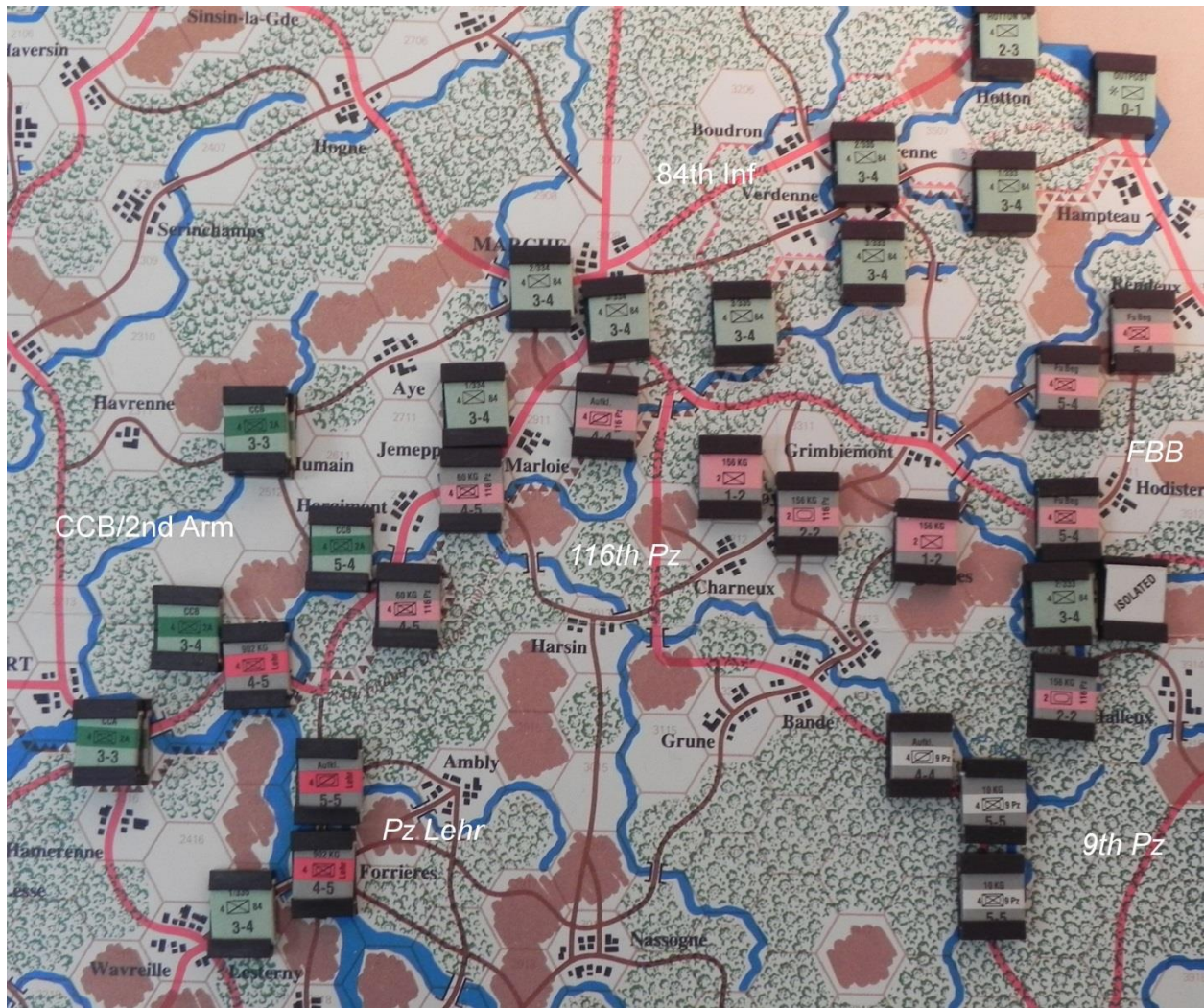
starts moving down the road to link up with them. (Now that CCB is committed, there won't be any reinforcements to block for several turns.)



Turn 10 by the Meuse

The loss of Forrieres opens up the possibility that *Panzer Lehr* drive through the south and open up a supply line to *2nd Panzer*. In order to prevent that, 1/335 Infantry shifts from Rochefort to cover the bridges across the Lesse. Two units from CCA replace it holding Rochefort. CCB doesn't really have enough strength to do more than push back *116th Panzer* a bit, which doesn't seem worthwhile, especially with *9th Panzer* on its way. So two CCB units are put on the line and two more are pulled back into reserve.

84th Infantry pulls its units east of Marche into a stronger, mutually supporting, with one battalion in reserve. This leaves 3/333 Infantry well behind the lines and isolated in Geres, but there isn't much hope of a relief operation.



Turn 10: 9th Panzer arrives, Forrieres falls, Geres besieged.

By the Meuse, the Ciney garrison is released, and Allied units lasso all of the 2nd Panzer units with ZoCs, immobilizing them. It remains to be seen whether they are strong enough to hold the rings closed.

Victory Points: -64.

Turn 11 (Night, December 25)

Panzer Lehr, 116th Panzer, and 4th Panzer all get one fuel unit each. 2nd Panzer is still isolated and ineligible (no airdrops on night turns).

2nd Panzer is just stuck. All of its units are surrounded by ZoCs, and units can't move directly from one ZoC to another. They can't bust their way out because they would have to attack all of the surrounding units, and in their isolated state they don't have the strength to do that.

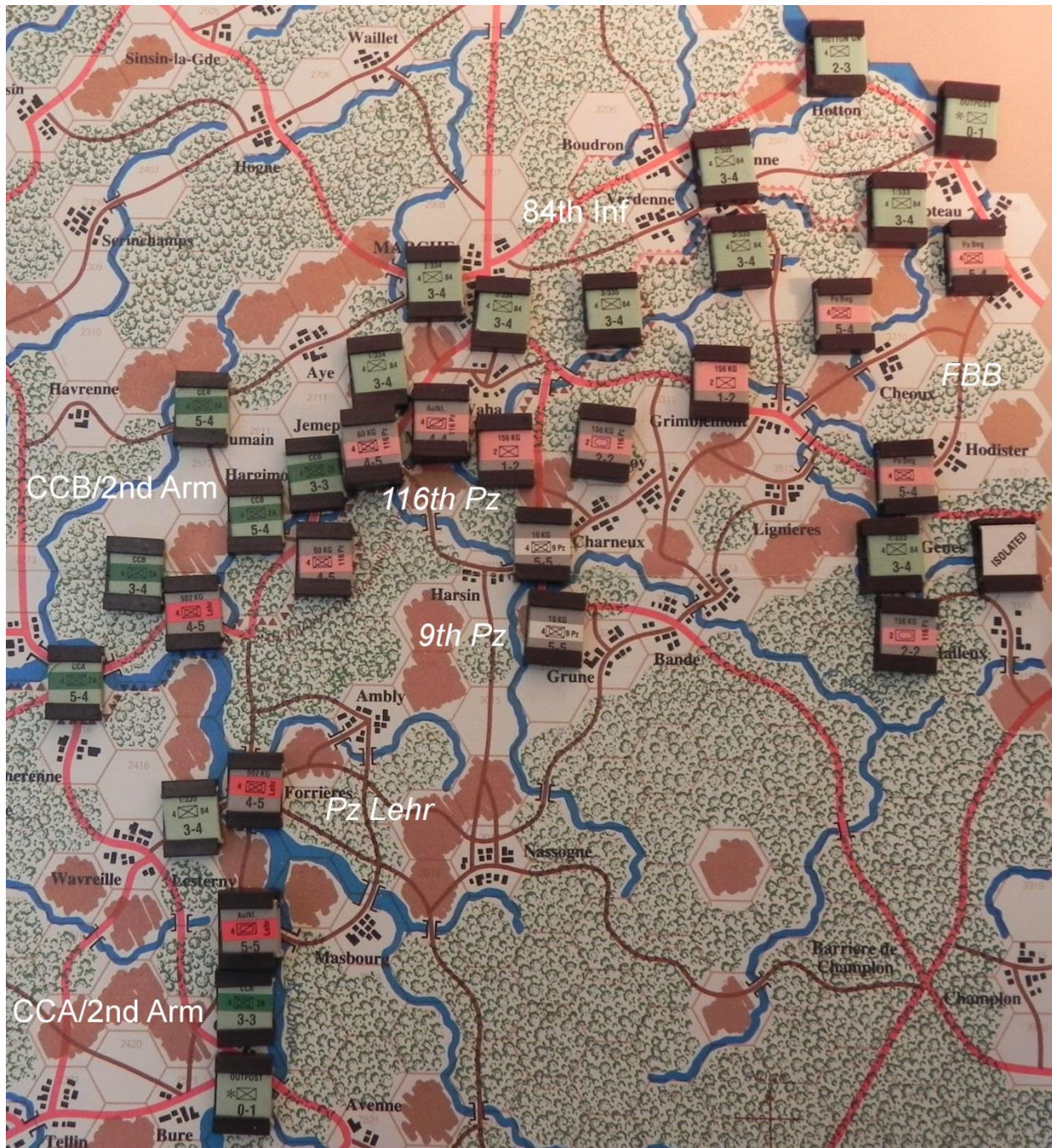
Panzer Lehr assigns its fuel to the recon unit. It follows the track through Ambly and Masbourg to Lesterny. Thus puts it on the opposite bank of the Lesse and in a position to strike north

towards Wavreille or south towards Grupont. Either will break the ring holding supply routes to *2nd Panzer* closed.

*116th Panzer* also assigns its fuel to its recon unit. This unit moves southwest from Waha to assault *1/334 Infantry*, with the help of the armor KG in Jemeppe. However, the Americans fail to budge, with an “engaged” result. The assault on the isolated *2/333 Infantry* in Genes has the same outcome. Two units of *Fuhrer Begleit* push into the woods on the far right of the line, working for a chance to drive on Hotton. The center of the *116th’s* sector is thinly held by split KG elements intended to keep the Americans from cutting supply to the units working around the flanks.

*4th Panzer* gives its fuel to the recon unit as well. It pushes into Jemeppe, although it arrives too late to participate in the fighting. The armor KG, without fuel, struggle up the road behind it.

If *2nd Panzer* is too weak to break out, the British and American forces are also too weak to reduce them. Thus, the stalemate on the Meuse continues. On the Lesse, *2nd Armor’s CCA* dispatches one unit to the woods north of Grupont to forstall an attack on the outpost there and prevent *Panzer Lehr* from approaching *1/335 Infantry* (guarding the Forrieres bridge) from the south. *CCB* sends a unit to occupy Hargimont so that the next attack on *1/334* will have to deal with them as well. *1/333 Infantry* moves into the rough southwest of Hampteau to impede *Fuhrer Begleit’s* push towards Hotton.



Turn 11

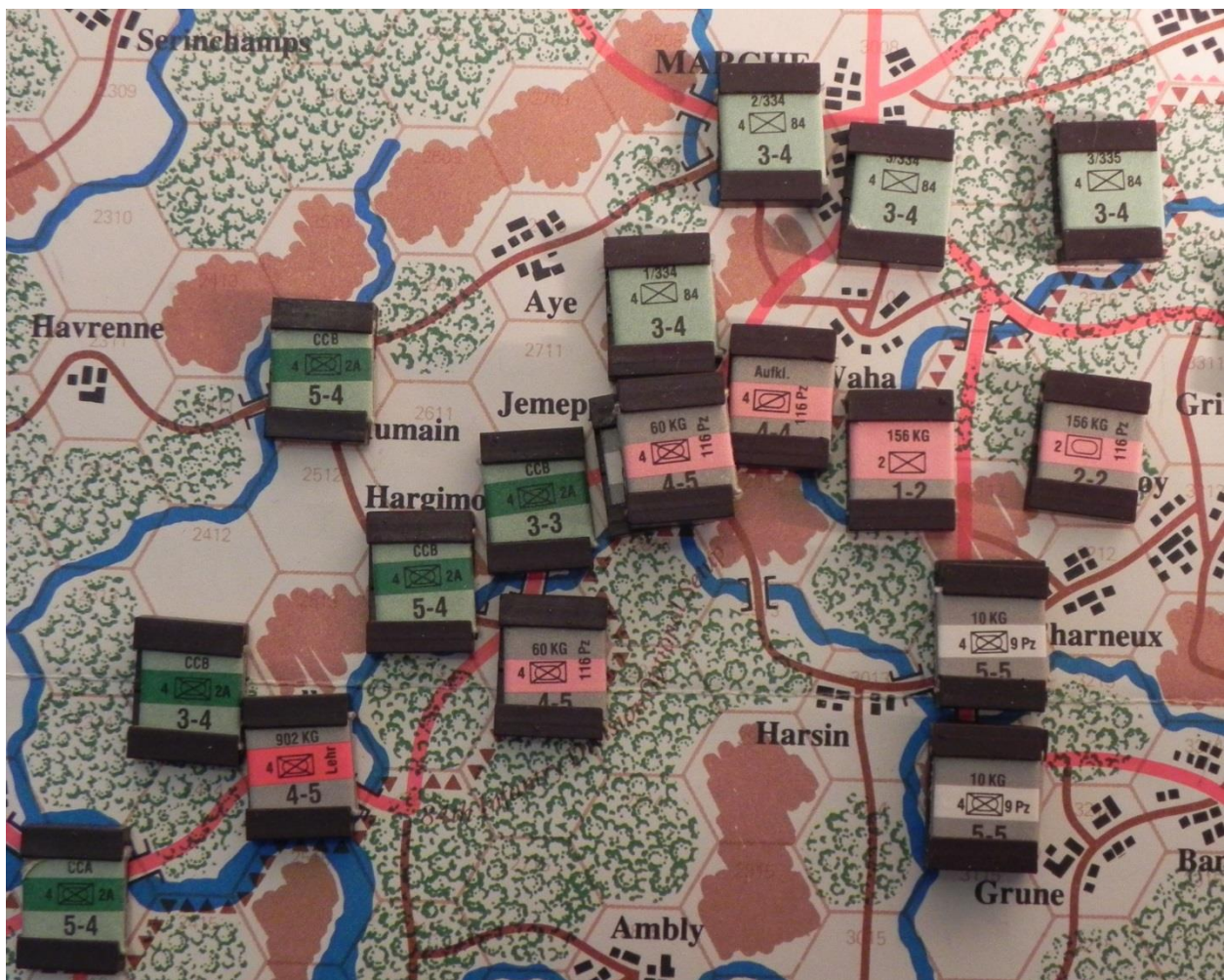
[I apparently forgot to record the American turn!]

Victory Points: -70

Turn 12 (AM, December 26)

Fuel die rolls: *2nd Panzer* and *Panzer Lehr* get no fuel. *116th Panzer* gets one unit. *9th Panzer* gets two. *116th Panzer* assigns its fuel to the unit in Jemeppe. *9th Panzer* assigns its fuel to the two units that are still behind the front.

Here is a point where the combat and movement rules start to lock together. *116th Panzer* wants to assault 1/334 Infantry northeast of Jemeppe in order to push towards Marche. However, in order for it to do so, some German unit must also attack the CCB unit in Hargimont, since that unit is also in the *116th* units' ZoC. There is a *9th Panzer* unit stacked with one of the *116th* units that could do that, as a soak-off. It would be better to wait for the rest of *9th Panzer* to come up and join the attack. However, that would burn up all the task points of the turn, just waiting around. So what to do? Attack with the soak-off, or coordinate a stronger attack later?



Turn 12: Decision time

I decide that the spirit of the Panzers would be to attack quickly and not wait for supports. The main attack reduces 1/334 Infantry and retreats it two hexes north. The German units advance in pursuit. The soak-off attack achieves an “engaged” result, which leaves the *9th Panzer* unit in position to join its compatriots in the attack when they have moved up from the rear. However,

the defending CCB fends off the combined an attack with another “engaged” result. This leaves the village in American hands and means that the *116th Panzer* units encircling Marche are dangerously exposed.

*Panzer Lehr*’s attempt to move through the southwest is stymied by CCA’s depoloyment of a unit between Grupont and Lesterny. While it isn’t much of an offensive threat, it can still cross the river at Grupont and move into the German rear areas, threatening to once again cut supply lines and leave the spearheads isolated. To prevent that, *Panzer Lehr* withdraws from Lesterny and retreats to the vicinity of Nassogne.

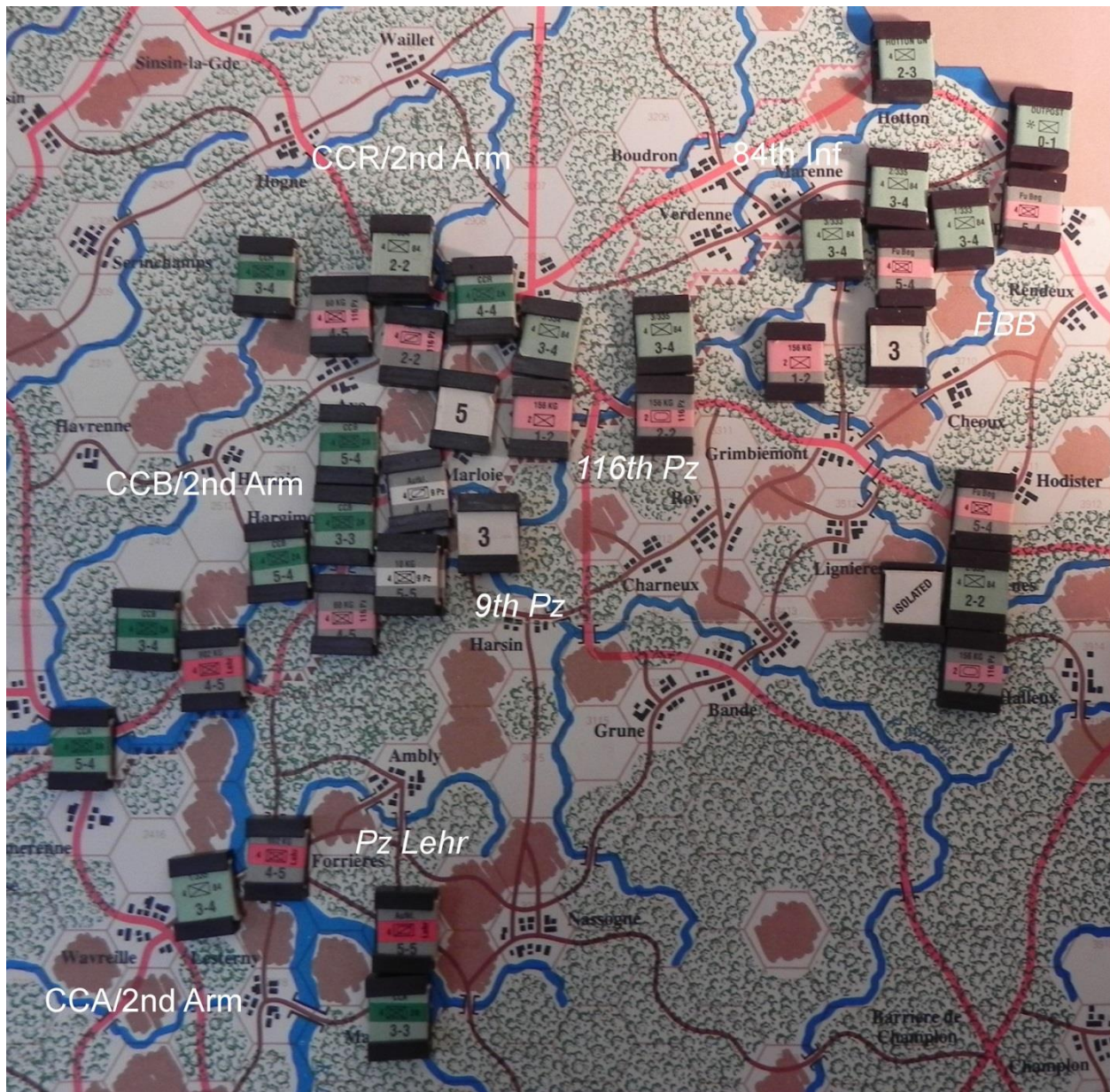
*Furher Belgeit* again tries to eliminate the isolated 2/333 Infantry in Geres. They succeed in reducing the Americans by one step. Further north, the split KG units of *116th Panzer* move into contact with the American infantry, to hamper their ability to redeploy. At the far eastern part of the German line, two *Furher Belgeit* units move around the flanks of 1/333 Infantry, occupying Hampteau in the process. However, they don’t have the task points to attack.

The stalemate on the Meuse continues, with *2nd Panzer* isolated and too weak to break out.

The Americans get their final reinforcements, in the form of 2nd Armor’s CCR. Two units go charging down the road into Marche to join the infantry in a counterattack against *116th Panzer*’s recon unit. Meanwhile, CCB sends a unit to aid its beleaguered comrades in Hargimont, assaulting the *9th Panzer* unit in Jemppe. They are stymied by an “engaged” result, but this is enough to keep *116th Panzer*’s units isolated west of Marche. When CCR’s attack goes in, the recon unit cannot retreat and must take a step loss.

To the east, 3/333 and 2/335 Infantry come to the aid of the isolated 1/333 and attack one of the *Furher Belgeit* units encircling it. The attack is weak and accomplishes little, but 1/333’s supply line is restored.

In the southwest, CCA’s unit follows the retreating *Panzer Lehr*, occupying Masbourg.



Turn 12: Attack and riposte

Victory points: -72. The Germans gain a little on net for eliminations, but the Americans continue to rack up more for occupying hexes.

Turn 13 (PM, December 26)

*2nd Panzer* is still isolated. The two *116th Panzer* units that advanced on Marche are as well.

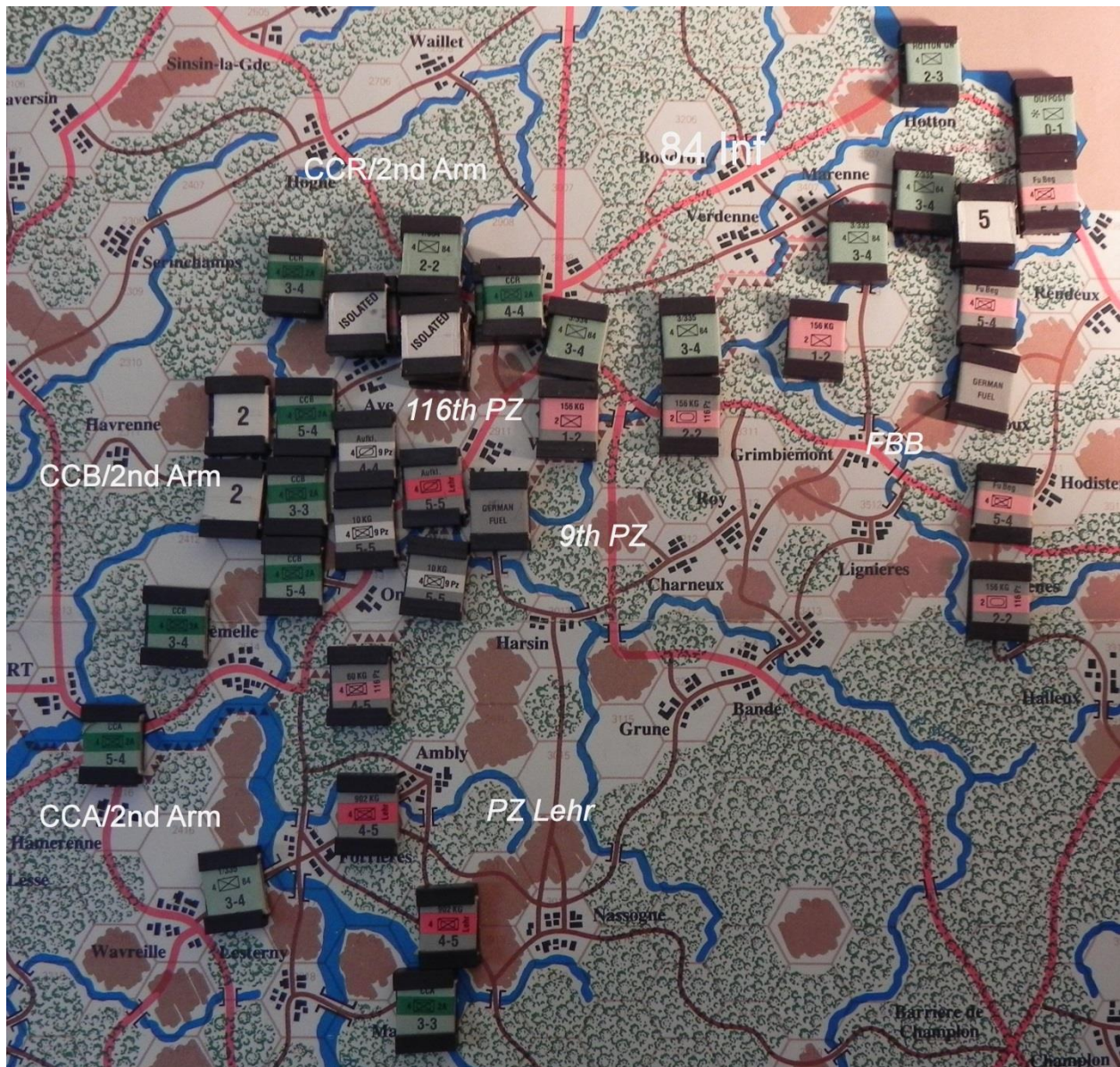
*Panzer Lehr* and *116th Panzer* each get one fuel unit. *9th Panzer* and *2nd Panzer* get none.

Once again, the Germans are faced with the problem of rescuing their spearhead from isolation. *Panzer Lehr* gives its fuel to the unit north of Masbourg, which takes the backroads north to join *9th Panzer* in Jemppe for an attack on CCB. The other two *9th Panzer* units renew the attack on

the other CCB unit in Hagrimont. Various *Panzer Lehr* and *116th Panzer* units have to pull back a bit to guard their left flank from encirclement attempts.

On the right flank, *116th Panzer* gives its fuel to the *Furher Belgeit* unit that was attacked in the previous turn. That enables it to pull back and then move in again to attack 1/333 Infantry at low odds, so that its counterpart can go after the outpost unit in Hampteau. Behind the lines, the siege of Genes continues.

Both CCB units are forced to retreat, and a supply route to the spearhead is reopened. Both attacks on the right flank result in “engaged,” but the American unit in Geres is finally eliminated.



German Player-Turn 13



2nd Armor shows that it, too can attack quickly. It launches attacks against both *116th Panzer* units near Marche and the *9th Panzer* units in the vicinity of Hagrimont. The attack against *9th Panzer's* recon unit is intended to cut off *116th Panzer's* line of retreat, but instead the Americans are thrown back. This allows the depleted *116th's* recon unit to scuttle back to Marloie, but the advance of CCR after that attack again traps the armored KG. It has no choice but to stand its ground and take a step loss. Strangely enough a CCB soak-off attack against *9th Panzer's* KG in Hagrimont itself succeeds in pushing the Germans out of the village.

CCB has enough task points left to organize a second attack on *9th Panzer's* recon unit. This time the Germans retreat, passing through their compatriots in Jemeppe. The depleted *116th Panzer* unit is also subjected to a second attack, and this time it's eliminated.

After the battle CCR reorganizes in the vicinity of Aye, while the infantry moves back into Marche.

On the eastern flank, 1/333 Infantry pulls back a bit to avoid being encircled again, while 3/333 and 2/335 move to threaten the infantry part of *116th Panzer's* split KG, which is holding the line between Marche and the *Fuhrer Belgeit* units. On the southwest, the American units follow the *Panzer Lehr* units in order to keep them in ZoCs and impede their mobility.

Victory Points: -78. The Germans were on the losing end of the unit eliminations, and they are still not controlling any valuable terrain.



Allied Player Turn 13

### Game End

I decided to stop the game at this point. *Further Belgeit* was scheduled to be withdrawn at the end of the next turn, unhinging the German right flank. *116th Panzer's* losses had left it incapable of further offensive action. That left on *9th Panzer* and *Panzer Lehr* to try to break through the strong American armored forces now deployed against them. I couldn't see that happening.