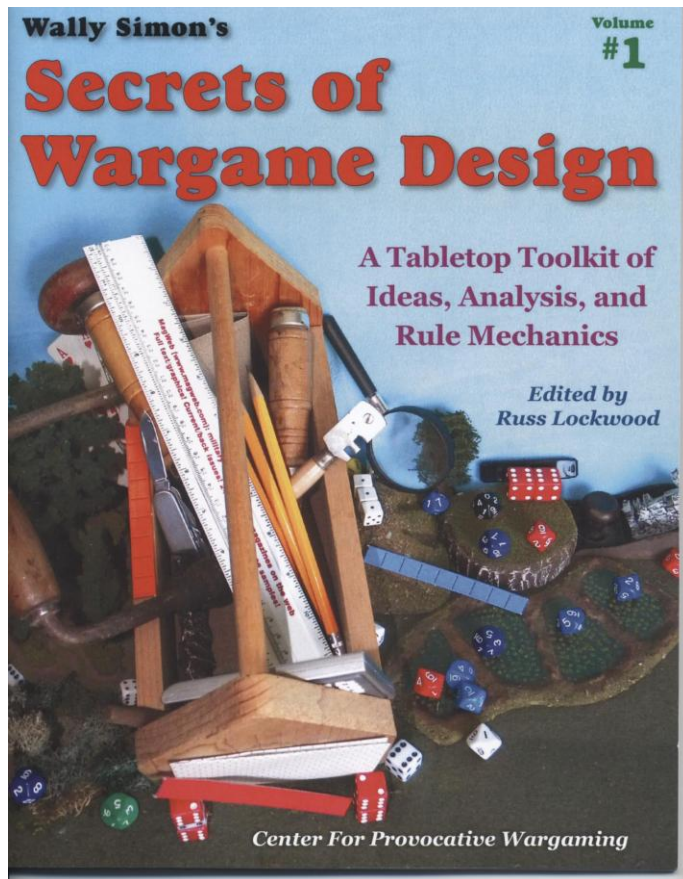


Wally Simon's Secrets of Wargame Design, Volume #1

Reviewed by Rich Barbuto

Wally Simon was one of the founders of HMGS and has made a lasting contribution to the hobby of miniature wargaming. Starting in the '70s, he wrote and published many essays and articles in *Potomac Wargamers Review*. These essays addressed theory, rules, and concepts with the goal in mind to create rule sets that "keeps all players continually busy and interested in what's going on." Wally passed away in 2005, but his contributions live on.

Editor Russ Lockwood (of MagWeb fame!) has collected and published thirteen of these gems. Russ subtitles this collection: 'A Tabletop Toolkit of Ideas, Analysis, and Rule Mechanics'. I can do no better in relating the content than to lay out the essay titles:



- Wally Rules
- ACW Telescoping Battlefield
- Renaissancing the Rules
- Revolutionary Morale
- The Parade Ground Indian Mutiny
- Pushing Panzers in WWII
- The Theory of Melee
- Card Movement Systems
- Ancient City Fight
- Ancient Country Fight
- Great Napoleonic Thoughts
- Big Picture Siege Game
- Sixth Sense for Sequences of Play

I was particularly struck by Wally's thoughts articulated in 'The Theory of Melee'. Wally noted that too often, when I unit was routed, that it ended up not rejoining the battle. Oh, the rules allowed for rally, reform, and re-join the fight, but the reality was that the game ended before the unit could again advance.

Wally preferred a unit being knocked backward, but coming back to the fray more quickly. Wally's rules reflected a guiding principle of "easy to rout, easy to rally." You will have to read his rationale, and even then you may not be entirely convinced. Yet, he makes a strong case worthy of further experimentation.

However, in his thought-provoking and witty article ‘Great Napoleonic Thoughts,’ he admits that he cannot confidently assign probabilities that suitably address national characteristics. Oh, he can glean from history and other rule sets that different armies behaved differently. The trouble is in designing these characteristics into a game that is still playable.

I think you are going to appreciate the wit and wisdom, especially if you are the sort of wargamer who tweaks rules or invents your own rules. This is worth reading and reflecting. Thank you, Russ Lockwood, for getting these essays out to a wider audience!!

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