

smooth and opaque as crude oil. All was still. Only the scraping of metal on hard wood floor could be heard. Both commanders knew the other was out there in the darkness some place. Each reviewing in his mind the orders he received that had brought him to this corner of the world. The Japanese Division Commander was unhappy at the thought of using his ships of the line as troop following ships:

CL YUBARI	6-5.5" guns	4-24"	TT/	35 kts	20303 points
CL TATSUTA	4-5.5" guns	6-21"	TT/	33 kts	10292 points
DD AMAGIRI	6-5" guns	9-24"	TT/	34 kts	10250 points
DD HIBIKI	6-5" guns	9-24"	TT/	38 kts	11210 points

AMAGIRI was at the van.

The Allied Division Commander after checking to his satisfaction that all ships were keeping station smartly, sat back to reflect on his orders. His task was a simple one: Broach Ognel Channel, show the flag and harass the enemy. Broach Ognel Channel: dramatically simple! This to be accomplished with:

DD MAHAN	5-5" guns	12-21"	TT/	36 kts	10320 points (flag ship)
DD BENSON	4-5" guns	5-21"	TT/	37 kts	7170 points
DD GLEAVES	4-5" guns	5-21"	TT/	37 kts	7170 points
DD BENHAM	4-5" guns	8-21"	TT/	36.5 kts	8399 points
DD GRIDLEY	4-5" guns	8-21"	TT/	36.5 kts	8399 points

Forty eight inches southwest of Ognel Channel, the Allied Commander sighted the enemy at the same time the enemy sighted him. He opened up all throttles to try to gain Ognel Channel. All that could be heard now was the ding-ding of the cable car at the corner, as both commanders jockeyed for the deep water of the channel. The channel is hemmed in on both sides with coral reef and masking tape, 27" at its widest point where the Japanese were rapidly approaching at 30 knots and 12" at the narrow end where the Americans were headed. MAHAN established his identity immediately by firing a ranging shot at AMAGIRI. The shot fell 12" short, his maximum range being 70". This act officially started phase one of the battle, Phase two consisted mostly of closing the gap.

On Phase three, AMAGIRI let go a salvo that scored on MAHAN but causing only slight damage, not sufficient to impair her fighting and navigating capability. The American destroyers also opened up but scored no hits.

Phase 4 saw AMAGIRI and YUBARI spitting fire with AMAGIRI concentrating on MAHAN (did he know she was flagship??) and YUBARI taking on BENSON. AMAGIRI scored, causing MAHAN to loose one TT and reducing her speed capability to 32 knots. MAHAN and BENSON were returning fire accompanied by GLEAVES and BENHAM. . . no hits. GRIDLEY'S guns were shielded by her sisters and could not fire but she received a hit from one of YUBARI'S wild shots causing slight damage.

Phase 5 saw the Allied guns beginning to find their targets! MAHAN and BENSON both fired on YUBARI. Only MAHAN managed to nick YUBARI. BENSON'S shots fell short. GLEAVES and BENHAM however, singled out AMAGIRI with BENHAM scoring and reducing AMAGIRI'S speed capability to 32 knots. YUBARI in the meantime was concentrating on MAHAN putting out of commission two more TTs and one 5" gun as well as reducing her speed to 25 knots. At this point MAHAN

started to veer to port and away from Ognel Channel! Could it be that the Commodore was wounded? Did he forget his objectives or neglect to share them with his subordinates? Alas! The Japanese Commander must also be wounded and must have also neglected to explain the objectives in his orders to his subordinates! He was passing the point at which he was to turn into the Randip River estuary and unload. The garison commander must have broken his chop sticks when he saw what was happening.

Meanwhile, back at the channel, phase 6 was evolving. GRIDLEY by now was in a position to fire her guns along with her sisters. They now formed a gentle curve following their leader away from Ognel channel with BENSON at the apogee. All the shots from the Japanese forces were falling short. One wild one however, found a mark on BENHAM, causing minor damage.

As MAHAN was turning her fanny to the Japanese, she let go with her after guns scoring on YUBARI and causing slight damage. Her sisters were firing away also but killing only a lot of fish. At this point (phase 7) AMAGIRI was turning south, trying to sneak up on GRIDLEY. Firing all six guns at GRIDLEY, she knocked out on TT and 4 ½ knots of her speed. YUBARI and TATSUTA now opened up on BENHAM and GLEAVES scoring on the former with enough points to cause her to lose two TTs, one gun and reduce her speed to 24 knots. GLEAVES came away with a scratch! All Allied ship were now firing in the general direction of Ognel Channel where the Japanese ships were rapidly spilling into the Allies' formation as though on a Banzai charge. YUBARI sustained one hit—slight damage. TATSUTA got her baptism with enough hits to cause the loss of one TT, reduce her speed to 27 knots and kill many soldier passengers who were crowded amidships.

Phase 8. Now the situation became grim! Torpedoes were launched in the previous move that have now traveled a considerable distance. In fact, some found their marks. Of a 3 spread salvo from TATSUTA, one homed in on BENSON, amidships and she went down firing all guns at YUBARI. MAHAN was still getting it from YUBARI. GLEAVES was receiving hits from TATSUTA and HIBIKI who was itching to get her licks in. GLEAVES lost one TT and her speed was reduced to 29 knots. HIBIKI was now giving it to BENHAM causing slight damage. AMAGIRI still trying to square off with GRIDLEY, scored with engine room damage and reducing GRIDLEY'S speed to 29 knots and denying her the use of one AA gun. These brave ships were by no means idle. As they received blows they paid back in kind.

MAHAN was bravely hitting back at YUBARI, taking away one gun and slowing her adversary down to 28 knots. BENHAM avenged BENSON by dealing TATSUTA in with 2 fatal torpedoes. The reader will recall that TATSUTA'S speed capability was reduced to 27 knots in phase 7. Lucky shot? At this rate she went down turning the pink water a little more so.

At this point the game was concluded. Tactically, no one was the victor. Strategically the Allies failed. The Japanese lost many helpless soldiers in full battle gear, a lot of rice, pickled radish and sake. But, they prevented the violation of Ognel Channel. They also landed the residue cargo and shocked troops from YUBARI, AMAGIRI and HIBIKI. This last, of course, is an assumption as MAHAN, GLEAVES, BENHAM and GRIDLEY withdrew. They limped home-ward with the memory of BENSON going down with TATSUTA (two brave ships) at Latitude 37 north and Longitude 122 west.

The foregoing prepared for the San Francisco Naval Wargamers by Jim Brown.