

"If there's a bustle in your hedgerow..."

Wall Advantage & Bocage

Part 2 – Bocage

Okay, now that you've mastered walls, hedges and Wall Advantage, it's time to move on to the next level of difficulty. Bocage was a tremendous impediment to the Allied forces following the Normandy invasion. For the first 15 years of ASL's existence, Bocage was just as much of an impediment to ASL players as well. The original rules were difficult to understand and apply (both for Bocage itself as well as the Wall Advantage rules discussed in the previous article) and many players just stayed away from any scenario involving Bocage. In retrospect, the decision to dedicate an entire DASL module ("Hedgerow Hell") to the topic may have been one of the things (along with the emphasis on miniatures) that prevented DASL from ever catching on with a large segment of the ASL community. Fortunately the revised rules in the 2nd edition of the Rulebook have helped clarify things. Despite this, Bocage rules still require some specialized interpretations of the rules to understand and apply correctly, and it is hoped that this article will help get more players to investigate what can be a truly enjoyable ASL experience.

What is Bocage? These generally represented "hedges" grown on top of earthen and rock walls. These had the effect of subdividing the Normandy battlefield into small areas, ringed fields with very limited LOS beyond that field. The hedgerows were tremendous defensive terrain (in close quarters) and very difficult to traverse quickly. The new version of the Bocage rules do a nice job of bringing these problems to ASL. Note that in the following discussion, a "Bocage hex" generally refers to a unit in a hex formed by a Bocage hexside(s) and with any applicable LOS crossing that hexside(s).

Who can use Bocage? Well, everybody, essentially. The effects of being behind a Bocage hexside apply to any unit. However, movement across Bocage hexsides is restricted to infantry units and fully tracked vehicles. There are also restrictions on Guns (not mortars or vehicular ordnance), which cannot change CA and fire in the same fire phase through a Bocage hexside (due to the difficulty in repositioning these weapons to a new firing position). A vehicle with the famous Culin device can breach a hedgerow (see B9.541) which aids movement across that hexside but otherwise changes none of the effects of that hexside.

How does Bocage affect Line of Sight (LOS)? Here's where the going starts getting tricky. In understanding this, remember that LOS is pretty much always reciprocal (if unit A can see unit B, then unit B can see unit A as well).

1. A unit behind a Bocage hexside can see over that hedgerow only into the adjacent hex (unless it has WA). Thus a unit without WA can only see into the adjacent hex. More importantly, that unit can only be seen from the adjacent hex.

More on that later. (Note that this is different from being able to see into a Location. Clearly from the rules a unit without WA and behind a Bocage hexside cannot be seen except from the adjacent hex. A Q&A from MMP has confirmed though that LOS can exist into a Bocage Location from a non-adjacent unit. This means that a non-adjacent unit can see into a Location behind a Bocage hexside [a "Bocage Location"], even if no actual units in that Location have WA and are thus out of LOS. Thus, an entrenchment behind a Bocage hexside can be seen (and thus revealed) by a non-adjacent unit, even though any units in that Location without WA cannot be seen, whether they are in the entrenchment or not.)

2. A unit with WA can see over the hedgerow and beyond the adjacent hex. Again, since the unit has WA, it can now see beyond the adjacent hex, but can also be seen by units beyond the adjacent hex.

3. LOS cannot be traced along a Bocage hexspine. That complicated sentence in B9.2 explaining that LOS can be traced along a hedge/wall hexspine if being traced to or from a hex that that hexspine touches does not apply to Bocage. No LOS.

4. Bocage blocks LOS as a one-level obstacle. Well, well, here is where things get even more confusing. The rulebook recommends treating Bocage like a one-story building. We already know that LOS extends into a Bocage hex under the right circumstances (i.e., if adjacent or when WA exists). However, LOS never extends beyond that hex for same-level LOS, just as if a one-story building were in the Bocage hex. Makes sense so far. What's trickier is how LOS to/from a higher elevation is handled. Again, use the building analogy. Pretend a one-story building were present within the Bocage hex. If a unit could see over that building to a hex beyond, then LOS exists to that farther hex. Thus, a unit on level one (i.e., either on a level-one hill or on the first level of a building) can never see beyond a Bocage hex, anymore than it could see ground-level beyond a woods hex or any other one-level obstacle.

Got it? The example should help.

How does Bocage affect fire attacks? Essentially the same as with walls (thus, a +2 TEM, not the +1 of a hedge hexside). As long as LOS exists, attacks can be made. What changes are the effects of WA status on that LOS, as will be explained later.

How does Bocage affect Concealment? Here's where the cool effects of Bocage really come into play, especially if you are the defender. If a unit would receive Bocage TEM vs. all enemy units with LOS to it (i.e., all LOS would cross a Bocage hexside), then two special rules apply:

1. That unit is treated as being in concealment terrain for all "?" loss/gain purposes. Not a big deal in and of itself. It's in

concealment terrain. Fine.

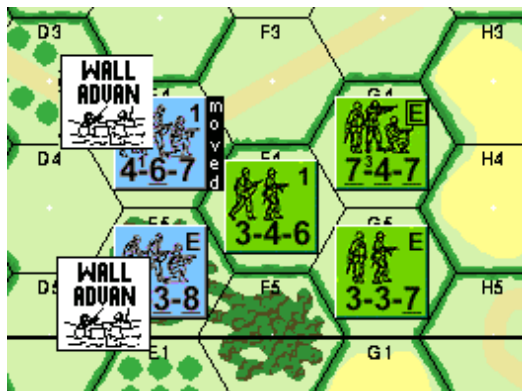
2. That unit is treated as being **out of LOS** for being able to gain "?" and also for "?" loss purposes related to MPh and RPh activities. This is big. "?" gain when out of LOS is much easier than would otherwise be the case as a quick perusal of the concealment table would indicate. Essentially, when out of all LOS a good-order unit can always automatically gain "?" unless within 16 hexes of an enemy unit while not in concealment terrain. But the first part above already said the unit is treated as being in concealment terrain. Thus a good-order unit behind Bocage can **always** gain concealment if no enemy unit has LOS clear of Bocage. Wow.

The second part of this means that those pesky RPh activities (e.g., rallying, deploying or recombining) that usually risk "?" loss now no longer affect concealment status, even with LOS. More importantly, movement behind a Bocage hexside **does not**

cause "?" loss, so reposition your troops at will. Of course, firing over the Bocage hexside will still cause "?" loss, but that's okay. As we've already seen, regaining concealment will be very easy once your next CCPh rolls around.

What's the sneakiest way to use Bocage? That's easy. Fire during your PFP and then drop WA. Your opponent won't have the chance to fire during Defensive fire. You can even reclaim WA during your subsequent APh. Bocage at its finest as defensive terrain! Of course, this only works as long as no enemy unit is adjacent. More importantly, remember Mandatory WA? You can only do this if you have in-hex of at least +1. If you don't, then you can't voluntarily give up WA, even in a Bocage hex.

Now for an example. I only have one, which seems to me to cover most of the major points. Perusing the examples in the Rulebook of course will further enlighten.



Example 1

All hedges are Bocage. Hex E5 (with the German 8-3-8) has woods, the other hexes with units have no terrain other than the bocage hexsides. No other units exist. Both German units have WA.

The 3-4-6 has LOS to both German units, regardless of WA status, because it is in the adjacent hex. The 7-4-7 has LOS to the 8-3-8 (because of the German's WA status) but no LOS to the 4-6-7 because LOS can't be traced along a Bocage hexspine. For the same reasons, the 3-3-7 can see the 4-6-7 but not the 8-3-8.

The 4-6-7 and 8-3-8, because they can claim bocage TEM vs all enemy units with LOS, are treated as being in concealment terrain (even though the 4-6-7 has only open ground in its hex) for "?" gain/loss issues and out of LOS for all "?" gain purposes and for "?" loss related to any RPh activities or MF expenditure. Since both are considered in concealment terrain and out of any LOS, both would automatically gain concealment, and would not require a dr. This

is true even with the 3-4-6 unit in the adjacent hex, because the German units have WA and thus the bocage TEM. If the 3-4-6 instead had WA, then the two German units would no longer receive the bocage TEM and the above would not apply.

And of course, the 8-3-8 can drop WA anytime, so could Prep Fire and then drop WA and disappear from view, since the 3-4-6 couldn't claim WA itself (because of the 4-6-7 which still has WA).

Now assume the 3-4-6 in F4 doesn't exist. The 4-6-7 can't voluntarily drop WA because it has no in-hex TEM of at least +1 (per Mandatory WA), so it remains in the LOS of the 3-3-7. The 8-3-8 can give up WA status because of the woods terrain in its hex, and would then be out of LOS of both remaining American units. If there was an entrenchment in the hex with the 4-6-7, that unit **could** drop WA to enter the entrenchment, and would be out of LOS of the 3-3-7 (but the 3-3-7 could see the entrenchment itself).

Okay, end of Lesson 2. Happy hunting, and don't forget your Culin Hedgerow Cutter.