

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

Wall Advantage & Bocage

Part 1 - Wall Advantage

If you polled owners of the 1st edition of the ASL Rulebook as to what were the most confusing rules, the odds were good that the answers would include Human Waves, Bocage and Wall Advantage. These have all been revised since then to clarify things. Human Waves were erraticized with the release of Doomed Battalions, while Wall Advantage and Bocage had to wait until the release of the 2nd edition of the Rulebook.

Wall Advantage (WA) and Bocage are much more understandable now than in their original format. However, they still can be tricky rules to apply. This is a shame, especially if it makes players shy away from certain scenarios. Four of my favorite ASL boards are deluxe boards e thru h, released in "Hedgerow Hell." Unfortunately, these boards (and the scenarios originally released in that module) are most vulnerable to any stigma against WA and Bocage. This will then be a two part article that will attempt to help clarify these rules in the hope that this will help people reevaluate any bias against those boards and scenarios and reconsider giving them a chance.

A more detailed analysis of the WA and Bocage rules, as well as their evolution from the 1st to the 2nd edition of the Rulebook is given in Journal 3. This article should be considered more of a primer, written with the idea that there can never be enough explanation or examples for difficult rules. Besides, it's not enough to just be given a laundry list of when you can declare WA. It helps to have it pointed out to you what the implications of that list are. Hopefully this will fulfill that goal.

What is Wall Advantage? WA refers to a situation where opposing units are in adjacent hexes with a wall or hedge hexside between them. Only one side can claim the TEM of that wall (+2) or hedge (+1) and that side is said to have WA over that hexside. To picture this, it's easy to imagine two combat units with a wall between them. The one with WA would be arrayed against the wall, able to fire over the wall at their opponents but at the same time having protection from the wall against return fire. Obviously this is a significant advantage to the side with WA who receives the appropriate TEM when fired on by the adjacent unit(s) but can fire back without that TEM. It should be noted though that a unit without WA could still claim the hexside TEM against firing units (whether adjacent or not) who do not have WA over that hexside. An important effect of WA is that in ASL, a unit either has WA over all of the hexsides of its hex or none at all. In other words, if a unit has WA over a hexside shared with an adjacent enemy unit, the enemy unit cannot claim WA over any of its other hexsides. Note though that Deluxe ASL is handled differently. Here, WA status is claimed/forfeited on a hexside-by-hexside basis. Thus a unit in

DASL could have WA over some of its hexsides, but not have it over others.

Who can claim WA? Generally any infantry unit can claim WA as long as it is not in an entrenchment, pillbox or above wire. The main requirements of the unit itself is that it be armed and not broken (although a broken or unarmed unit can claim WA if other friendly units in the same hex have WA). There are a couple of other exceptions, given in rule B9.32. A vehicle can also claim WA as long as it is not eligible to claim an in-hex TEM of +1 or greater.

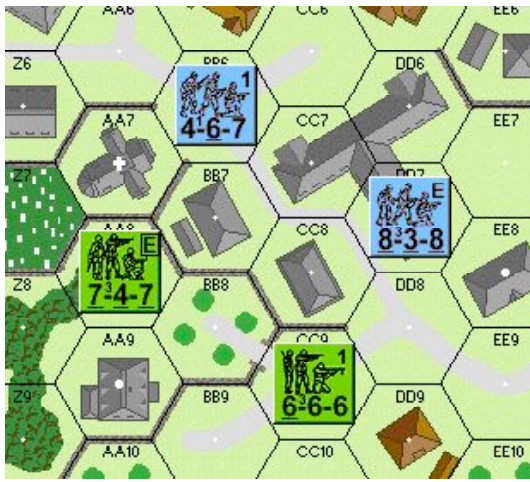
When can a unit claim WA? This is somewhat tricky. Rule B9.322 lists five specific times a unit can voluntarily claim WA:

1. During setup
2. At the end of **any** Rally Phase
3. During the unit's Movement Phase or Advance Phase
4. When a unit loses HIP
5. When all adjacent enemy units lose/forfeit WA over any shared hexsides.

Note that the opponent's MPH is **not** one of the times listed. Thus a unit cannot suddenly lay claim to WA at the moment an enemy unit moves into the adjacent hex, something that I think a number of players miss. However Mandatory WA (B9.323) helps bail out the forgetful player. While the preceding rule says "Wall Advan" counters must be placed to indicate WA status, this rule states that a unit automatically gets WA status **if possible** if it is unable to claim any in-hex TEM of +1 or greater. No counter is needed unless an enemy unit moves adjacent, at which point the counter clarifies which side has WA. Thus if you have a unit in open ground and an enemy unit moves adjacent on the other side of a wall/hedge, your unit is already assumed to have claimed WA, even if you forgot to do so.

When is WA lost or forfeited? Note that per B9.323, a unit without an in-hex TEM of +1 or greater **cannot** voluntarily forfeit WA (not that you'd likely want to do so anyway). Otherwise WA is lost if the conditions of B9.32 no longer apply (i.e., if a unit is no longer armed and unbroken, if it claims an in-hex TEM, or if an enemy unit occupies the same Location, such as an enemy vehicle passing through). Unlike claiming WA, voluntary forfeiting of WA can be done at any time. Thus, if a unit has WA over a wall/hedge, but an enemy unit has LOS to that hexside clear of obstacles (and thus clear of any TEM), the unit may choose to take any in-hex TEM (e.g., if there was a building in the hex) and forfeit the WA so that any attack against it would get that TEM. However, this decision cannot be made after declaration of an attack until that attack is resolved.

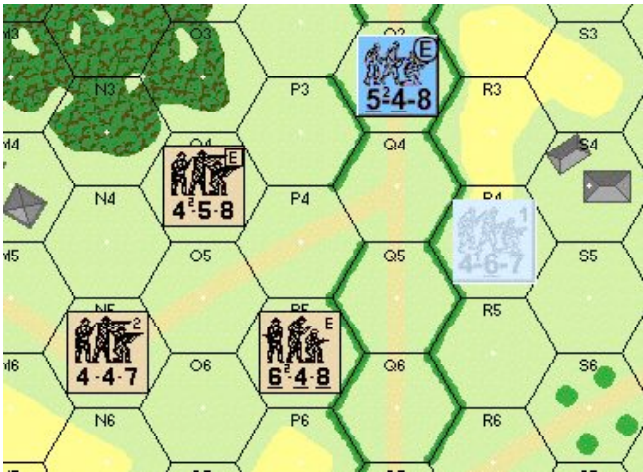
So, here are the examples.



Example 1

German MPH. The 6-6-6 is in open ground, while the 7-4-7 is in woods. The 8-3-8 Assault Moves into the building in CC8. The 6-6-6 automatically has WA (B9.323 Mandatory WA) since it has no in-hex TEM of at least +1 (and should now place a WA counter on CC9 so that there will be no confusion). The 8-3-8 would still receive building TEM for any Defensive fire but could not claim WA itself because the 6-6-6 already has WA.

The 4-6-7 now Assault Moves into the church in AA7. The 7-4-7 would like to have WA as it would provide the +2 wall TEM against any fire from AA7 rather than the +1 the woods provide. However, the American doesn't qualify for Mandatory WA (having a +1 in-hex TEM already) and cannot claim WA because it is the German's MPH. The 4-6-7 meanwhile has several choices. It could claim WA immediately upon entering AA7, giving it a +2 TEM for any Defensive fire from AA8. It could stay in the church, receiving a +3 TEM for any Defensive fire and then claim WA during its APH, or advance into BB7 or Z7 and likewise claim WA during the APH. It could also advance into AA8 in which case neither unit would have WA. Finally, if it stayed in the church, or advanced into BB7 or Z7 without claiming WA, then the 7-4-7 would be eligible to claim WA during its subsequent RPH (the German could also claim WA during the American RPH, but only if the American did not claim it first as per B9.322).



Example 2

British MPH. The 5-4-8 is in open ground and the 4-6-7 is in grain. The shading on the 4-6-7 indicates HIP. The 4-5-8 assault moves into P3. The 5-4-8 has Mandatory WA since it is in open ground (and again should now place a WA counter), and thus can fire against the British unit with a -1 DRM for FFMO. The German will also receive the +1 hedge TEM for any AFPH fire from the 4-5-8.

The 6-4-8 assault moves into Q5. Now the German has a choice. Unlike the American 7-4-7 in Example 1, the 4-6-7 actually could claim WA once the British unit moves adjacent because a HIP unit becoming revealed is eligible to claim that status. (This seems realistic, indicating an ambush set up by the German.) Thus by revealing itself, the German would have WA and could fire on the British with the FFMO DRM, just like the 5-4-8 could against the 4-5-8. Of course, the German could also simply keep HIP. If the British unit subsequently advanced into R4, the German would be placed under a "?" counter at the beginning of the CCPh, with a -2 drm on its ambush die roll.



Example 3

Japanese MPH. All units are in open ground except for the 3-3-6 and the 4-4-7 which are in stone buildings. There is a leader (not pictured) stacked with the 3-4-8 squad.

The 3-4-7 assault moves into DD1. The 5-3-7 automatically has WA as it is in open ground (Mandatory WA). The 3-4-7 would still receive wall TEM for any Defensive fire from the 3-3-6 in FF1 if it wanted (although it would likely take the +3 TEM for being in the building instead).

The 4-4-8 assault moves into DD4. The 3-3-7 cannot claim WA since the 4-4-7 in FF3 has WA already, and a unit cannot have WA over some hexsides and not others (except in DASL). The 4-4-8, upon entering DD4, has the option of claiming WA immediately, or may remain in the building to receive the +3 stone building TEM for any Defensive fire. For this example, assume it claims WA immediately. Note that even though the Chinese 3-3-7 unit does not have WA, it would still be eligible for wall TEM against fire from the 3-4-8 in DD2.

Because the 4-4-7 has WA, he cannot claim in-hex TEM vs. any shot. Realizing that the Chinese 5-3-7 in EE1 has a clear LOS (and thus would suffer no TEM on a shot), the Japanese player drops WA for the 4-4-7 so it would be eligible for the +3 TEM for any shot against it. However, despite the 4-4-7 forfeiting WA, the 3-3-7 still cannot claim WA because of the 4-4-8 which now occupies DD4 and which has WA over the common hexside.

The 3-4-8 now declares a Banzai Charge (remember, there is a leader stacked with this squad), and picks the 5-3-7 in EE1 as its target. It survives Defensive fire in EE2 and enters EE1. As soon as it enters that Location, the 5-3-7 automatically forfeits WA. The 3-4-7 in DD1 could then immediately claim WA if it wanted to.

Congratulations. You've finished Lesson 1. Reread the examples in the ASL Rulebook to further reinforce the WA rules. Next up will be the terror of Normandy: Bocage.