

PEARL HARBOR
7th DECEMBER 2016
(75th Anniversary)

I decided that it might be a “nice idea” (?) to try and commemorate the ‘infamous day’ of Sunday, December 7th 1941, on our usual Wednesday evening club meeting, which happened to fall on the 75th anniversary.

I used 1:600th aircraft, and 1:3000th ships. The ruleset used was General Quarters.

Paul Hancock re-created Ford Island (along with the immediate surrounding islands) on an 8’ x 6’ table, using hex terrain tiles.

Battleship Row was laid out, along with those ships on the opposite side of Ford Island. We forewent any destroyers and smaller craft, concentrating mainly on the attack/s on Battleship Row, Ford Island, and dockyard facilities (we ignored the Japanese midget submarine attacks).

I took control of the Akagi’s Air Groups, Paul Hancock had the Kaga, Barrie Daniels the Soryu, and Dave Grenz the Hiryu. I didn’t factor in the other two carrier Air Groups as they had the airfields and dock facilities as their missions.

Japanese First Wave Attack.

There was no opposition at all to the First Wave.

The Akagi sent 3 x ‘Kates’ against the USS Maryland, and 4 x ‘Kates’ against the USS Tennessee. All aircraft were loaded with 800kg Armour Piercing bombs. I managed one hit on the Maryland, and totally missed the Tennessee. Damage to the hull.

The Kaga sent 7 x ‘Kates’ against the USS Arizona. All loaded with 800kg AP bombs. They achieved one hit on the Arizona, causing damage to the hull.

Next it was the Soryu's turn. She sent 5 x 'Kates' loaded with 800kg AP bombs against the USS Nevada. Again, one hit was the result. Again, hull damage.

Finally it was the turn of the Hiryu. She sent 5 x 'Kates' against the USS California. They all missed their target.

Not an auspicious first attack.

The Akagi then sent 6 x 'Kates' against the USS West Virginia. They were loaded with Mk 91 Aerial torpedoes. Two torpedo's hit the battleship, causing damage to the hull and upper structure.

The 'Kaga' sent 6 x 'Kates' against the Nevada. They were loaded with Mk 91 Aerial torpedoes. The Nevada suffered two torpedo hits. One to the hull, and one to the superstructure.

Next it was the turn of the Soryu. She sent 4 x 'Kates' loaded with Mk 91 Aerial torpedoes against the California. They all missed.

Finally it was the turn of the Hiryu's 4 x 'Kates' loaded with Mk 91 Aerial torpedoes against the West Virginia. Again, they all missed.

Not a good start to a "surprise attack" with no opposition. Could have done (much) better. Damage to a number of battleships. The Nevada is close to sinking due to hull damage.

HISTORICAL RESULT.

USS Oklahoma 'turned turtle' and sank on being struck by the ninth torpedo hit.

USS Arizona hit, magazine exploded, and she sank.

USS Nevada badly damaged, but managed to get under way.

Japanese Second Wave Attack.

The Soryu sends 8 x 'Vals' loaded with 250kg GP (General Purpose) bombs. Her commander decides to divide his aircraft into two attacking forces – 4 x 'Vals' against USS Pennsylvania, and 4 x 'Vals' against the California. This time, fortune favours the attackers. Two bomb hits on the Pennsylvania and four bomb hits on the California. The Pennsylvania takes 50% hull damage, and California receives four bomb hits, resulting in 50% hull damage, and superstructure damage. This has a major impact upon the ship.

The Hiryu sends 8 x 'Vals' loaded with 250kg GP bombs. Two attack the California, and six attack the USS Maryland. The California takes one hit, and the Maryland two hits. The Maryland suffers 50% hull damage.

The Akagi sends 9 x 'Vals' loaded with 250kg GP bombs; 6 against the Maryland, and three against USS Raleigh (light cruiser). The AA defences are now waking up to the attack, and two of the six attackers over the Maryland become casualties (one is destroyed, a second is damaged/driven off). The Maryland suffers two bomb hits; one on the hull, and one on the superstructure. One bomb hits the Raleigh causing 50% damage to the superstructure.

The final attack from the Kaga (probably the most devastating of all) with 13 x 'Vals' equipped with 250kg GP bombs (four against the Nevada, five against the West Virginia, and four against the Tennessee) results in 2 hits on the Nevada, causing 50% hull damage, 5 hits on the West Virginia causing 50% hull damage, and severely wrecking the superstructure, and one hit on the Tennessee which causes no damage.

HISTORICAL RESULT

USS Nevada badly damaged is beached to prevent her sinking and blocking the Channel into Pearl Harbor. One torpedo, and multiple bomb hits.

USS West Virginia, half-sunk (9 torpedo & 2 bomb hits).

USS California; one bomb hit, listing.

All 8 battleships are either sunk, or badly damaged.

That's the end of the (historical) attacks on our part. Our result is the USS Nevada sunk, the USS Maryland sinking, and the West Virginia severely damaged and close to sinking.

At this point (and just for 'the hell of it') the Japanese High Command decide to launch a third strike. A "What If"?

This consists of the following.

Japanese Third Wave Attack

The Soryu launches 8 x 'Kates' loaded with Aerial torpedoes, and 8 x 'Vals' loaded with 250kg GP bombs. These are escorted by 8 x Zero's.

Their targets were as follows:

4 x 'Vals' and 4 x 'Kates' were to attack the Arizona.

(2 x obsolete P-36 US fighters got airborne and attacked this formation, but were intercepted by the 8 x defending Zero's. One P-36 is shot down, and one damaged/driven off, for the loss of one Zero shot down).

The attack goes in on the Arizona. AA fire (which by now has well and truly 'woken up'), damages/drives off 1 x 'Kate', and shoots down 1 x 'Val'. The attack causes 50% damage to the superstructure.

4 x 'Kates' are sent to attack the Oklahoma.

1 x 'Kate' is shot down by AA fire over the Oklahoma, but the attack is successful, causing a hit, and damage to the superstructure and hull. The Oklahoma is now badly damaged.

4 x 'Vals' attack the Tennessee.

AA fire shoots down 1 x 'Val', and damages/drives off another 'Val'.

One hit causes 50% damage to the superstructure.

The Kaga launches 13 'Vals' loaded with 250kg GP bombs, and 13 x 'Kates' loaded with Mk 91 Aerial torpedoes. They are escorted by 8 x Zero's.

These attack as follows.

6 x 'Vals' with 250kg GP bombs attack the California. Three bomb hits are scored, but the torpedoes miss. The California sinks.

3 x 'Kates' with Aerial torpedoes, and 2 x 'Vals' loaded with 250kg GP bombs attack the Neosho. AA fire results in one 'Kate' shot down, and one 'Kate' damaged & driven off. No hits.

5 x 'Vals' loaded with 250kg GP bombs attack the Oklahoma. She suffers three bomb hits. She sinks. AA fire ineffective.

5 x 'Kates' with Aerial torpedoes attack the West Virginia. AA fire results in one 'Kate' shot down, and one 'Kate' damaged/driven off. Two torpedo hits finishes off the West Virginia and she finally sinks.

The Japanese C.i.C decides that is enough aircraft to complete the job, and he "calls it a day" (or evening in our case).

Our final tally is as follows:

5 x battleships sunk (California, Nevada, West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Maryland).

3 x battleships badly damaged (Arizona, Tennessee and Pennsylvania: the Arizona suffered 25% hull damage, and 50% superstructure damage; the Tennessee 50% superstructure damage; and the Pennsylvania the least of all, 25% hull damage – this was due to the fact that she was away from 'Battleship Row' and Ford Island, in 'Dry Dock', hence quite well protected).

The USS Raleigh (Light Cruiser) was quite badly damaged (being berthed amongst the battleships) suffering 25% hull damage, and 50% superstructure damage.

Unlike the Historical attack, no Air Commander in our attacks was fooled into attacking USS Utah, an ex-WW1 battleship, which had been de-commissioned, and re-equipped as a training ship for anti-aircraft gunners (unfortunately all of her many AA guns were unmanned for the duration of the attack).

The only battleship 'missing' was the USS Colorado. She was in Puget Sound Navy Yard, at Pearl Harbor, and away from the attack.

The aircraft losses were as follows:

US

2 x (obsolete) P-36 fighters attacked a formation from the Soryu during the Third attack. 1 x P-36 shot down, 1 x P-36 damaged/driven off.

JAPANESE

Akagi

1 x 'Val' shot down.

1 x 'Val' damaged/driven off.

Kaga

2 x 'Kates' shot down

2 x 'Kates' damaged/driven.

Soryu

2 x 'Vals' shot down.

1 x 'Kate' shot down.

1 x Zero shot down

1 x 'Val' damaged/driven off.

1 x 'Kate' damaged/driven off.

The above totals are model aircraft, where 1 model = 2 real aircraft.

On that basis, in our game 6 x 'Vals' were shot down, 4 x 'Vals' damaged/driven off; 6 x 'Kates' were shot down, 6 x 'Kates' were damaged, and 2 x Zeroes were shot down.

(Historically the Japanese lost 29 aircraft of all types during the attack).

So there you have it, pretty much the same result but it took 3 attacks during our "re-run of Pearl Harbor" to achieve it.

A “throw away comment” was made at the end of the game: “what if” the US had left Pearl Harbor with their fleet, knowing the attack was coming (as some say they did – we’ve all seen the TV documentaries), and the two fleets met in battle, in the open sea (giving away the fact the US had broken the Japanese Naval code – or was it Bletchley Park)?

Yes, it is “doable” (I have the ships and aircraft), but my money would still be on the Japanese being victorious.

The Japanese Attack Force had 2 x (modernised) battleships, 6 x aircraft carriers, 2 x heavy cruisers, 1 x light cruiser, 10 x destroyers and 30 x submarines (including midget subs).

The US had 9 x battleships (all WW1 vintage, some had been slightly modernised), 2 x heavy cruisers, 6 x light cruisers (2 x WW1 vintage), 29 x destroyers and 4 x submarines in Pearl Harbor. Yes, they could (with prior knowledge) have had the Enterprise and Lexington, and their cruiser/destroyer escorts.

The USS Enterprise was 200 miles West of Pearl Harbor at 0620 on Sunday December 7th 1941, having just launched 18 x SBD Dauntless on a scouting mission, ending in them landing at Ford Island. The Enterprise was headed towards Pearl Harbor at this time. Once info came through of the attack, she turned away, (hoping not to be spotted by any Japanese recce aircraft).

The USS Lexington (aircraft carrier) had left Pearl Harbor on December 5th 1941 with 5 x cruisers.

So much for fate. It could have been (oh so much) worse for the US.

