

# TASK FORCE 144

*The Official Newsletter of Model Warship Combat, Inc.*

[www.mwci.org](http://www.mwci.org)

*Winter - 2009*



## MARCH 13-15, 2010 BROUHAHA ON THE BAYOU

BOUQUET, LA

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JULY 18-34, 2010

## NATS

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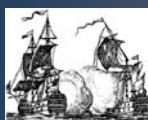
Our regional battles have become very enjoyable father-son events. Here Tim Krakowski gets help preparing his USS Augusta for the next sortie.



## Labor Day Lead-Fest Fall Regional September 5-7, 2009 Pooler, GA

By Brian Koehler

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In 'the slot' along the shore only the battleships dared congregate (HMS Valiant can already be seen succumbing to the fight)





# The Lighter Side of NATS

By Tyler Helland

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As I sit here in my Minnesota winter wonderland, wondering if battling season will ever come again. As I watch videos from last year's NATS, longing for battles past. As I think of an article to help out the new Ediot I thought I should share some of the funny things that happened to me this year in Colorado. NATS is a huge event and there is no way to see it all! There are times that are intense on the water but almost as much fun is the funny little things that happened on the water. I thought I'd share some quick stories from this last NATS partially for my own nostalgia and partially to fill in the captains that may have missed some of the funny stuff that I saw.

Because of the storm on Monday night which left us without power for part of the night, Tuesday's battles were a bit delayed so everyone could catch up on lost sleep and battery charging time. By the time the second fleet battle of the day was coming to a close, the sun was sitting fairly low

in the sky which actually made for some beautiful ship silhouettes against the Rocky Mountains off to the West. At one point in the battle I was walking about fifty feet behind the Derfflinger as I was driving down the shore looking for a target for my haymaker. I spotted a casemated ship with a multiple deck assembly that was pointy at both ends and thought, "Oh good, Ty's Warspite is just sitting next to shore and he doesn't even see me coming." As I flew up side to side and started wailing away some of the captains around me started yelling, "What are you doing?" After ripping off about 10 sidemount shots I stopped and realized that I had been shooting at Gerald's Kongo. It was just earlier that year at Missouri regional that John Bruder and I had a discussion about how some of the British and Japanese ships (especially the British made Japanese ships looked similar).


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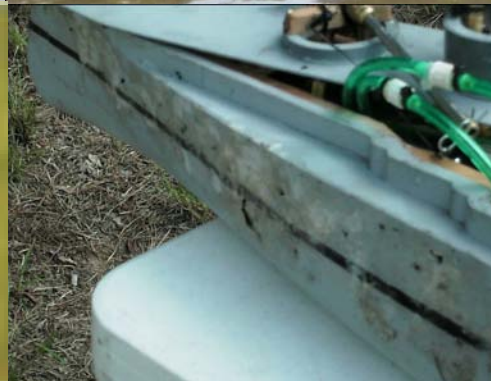


Many ships succumbed to the intense fire!

## Labor Day Lead-Fest -Continued-

A wonderful time was had at the annual Fall regional at Tom Triplett Park in Pooler, GA. Fifteen captains attended the three-day event, including three northern guests from the IRCWCC. Photos by Pete Demetri. 

In the open area cruisers ran in and out to take swipes at the big ships.



Damage was severe!





## On the Horizon

### Strike Models Prototype Regulator Review

By Chris Kessler

As you may or may not know for part of NATS 2009 I used a prototype regulator that Strike Models is planning on stocking as part of their inventory. I've been asked to write a short review about it since there are a number of people interested in it.

Thursday morning Steve Morgret asked if I would be willing to test his prototype regulator and actually battle with it. I like new and shiny things just as much as the next kid so I said sure, why not. I would test it

a little over lunch and run it in campaign. If that went well I would run it again in the fleet battle on Friday morning.

Normally I use a Palmer Female Stabilizer. The Palmer FS is light and adjustable which are features I really like. It isn't perfect. It is still a paintball regulator and doesn't really like getting dirty water in it or being treated poorly which are things that happen rather easily in our hobby; let's face it, we're rough on equipment. The Strike Regulator prototype that I was borrowing was about the same weight as the Palmer that I use. They both weight roughly 6 oz. with the brass fittings necessary to connect to my boat's CO2 system.

A standard Williams regulator is about 12 oz. I don't have a cut down Williams regulator so I don't know how it compares to one of those. Size wise it is maybe a little shorter than a standard Williams regulator and it has a smaller diameter.



The outlet port is a NPT female fitting out of the side, similar to the Palmer but without the 90 degree elbow. This is a prototype model and when Steve had it built he had the pressure set at 140 psi and used a roll pin so it wasn't adjustable. Steve said production models would be adjustable and would use set screws to adjust the pressure.

To begin with I filled up my CO2 tank and tweaked my guns. Then I just kept loading and firing off full magazines until the tank was empty.

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## Strike Models Prototype Regulator Review -Continued-

I unloaded as fast as I could and didn't encounter any problems with the regulator freezing up. I did notice that due to the design of the threaded portion of the regulator and the o-ring I had to torque the bottle down a bit more to get a good seal; it wasn't a big deal, it was just harder than I am used to.

The regulator performed just fine in both campaign and fleet battles. I even sank on Friday to make sure it didn't mind getting wet. Yeah, the sink was for research ... really. After the sink I cleared my guns without a problem.

From my experience with this regulator I think it has a lot of promise for our hobby. I can't say I completely trust it yet. Nor can I say everybody should get one since I only had it in my boat for two days but so far it looks good. Long term reliability is very important in our hobby and time will tell if this product is up to the task.



## State of the Arts

By Peter Ellison

After reading a number of older articles I found it fun to review what has changed over time so here is a technology survey from NATS 2009.

Names have been redacted for security purposes. With the exception of radios these observations are my own and are not scientific.

**CO2** – The trusty heavy weight and turned down fixed pressure brass regulators were the most common by far. For small ships there are regulators from a paintball supplier made out of aluminum. Most captains choose to use 3.5 oz. or 9 oz. tanks with on/off valves on the bottle. Like many aspects of the ships there is a little variety here and there with one battle cruiser using larger disposable tanks and one tiny class 2 ship that used a 80 gram refillable tank.

**Fire Control** - Most ships that I looked at ran Kip solenoids for controlling CO2. Again there is a little variation with some ships running Clippard solenoids and a few ships with poppets. Poppets were mostly

used on cruisers while most battleships ran some form of solenoid. In general most ships that had solenoids had electronic firing boards but a few ships used servos and micro-switches to trigger the solenoids.

**Cannons** – Most are some form of o-ring restrictor type cannon. There were a couple of ships with geek breech cannons but they were a minority. I only saw one ship with a single unit spurt gun. I did not see any radio controlled traversing or elevating cannons this year. There were two unusual cannon setups; one was a three side-mount, one bow gun Nagato with two pumps and the other was the Fylgia with a bow spurt gun.

**Motor Control** – There was a lot of variety in this category. Many captains used the trusty micro-switch throttle, not exotic but reliable. There is a growing number of electronic speed controllers (ESC) finding their way into warships. This year there were a couple of combat robotics speed controllers that seemed to perform well.

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## State of the Arts -Continued-

Most of the ESC captains used programmable endpoints to limit speed. There still are at least two who used mechanical stops on the radio to limit the travel. The shift to ESC is enabled by more complex radios that allow you to program the endpoints on the servo travel.

**Radios** – The switch to 2.4 GHz is underway. Of the 57 ships signed up for NATS twenty-six were 2.4 GHz, twenty-two were 75 MHz, seven were 27 MHz and two were Hams. If you just look at the primary ships seventeen were 2.4 GHz, eleven were 75 MHz and two were Ham radios. Only a couple of crystals needed to be swapped to allow everyone to play without conflicts. I hazard a guess that most captains use push buttons on their radios to fire guns though there are still a few with templates and quick thumbs using the stick to fire the guns. Another thing that I saw this year was a new generation of very cheap imported 2.4 GHz radios programmable with by computer.

**Batteries** – A significant shift is taking place. The trusty sealed lead acid (SLA) battery is giving way to nickel metal hydride (NiMH) batteries. Most of the cruisers have switched to NiMH batteries and have 5 amp/hour or 10 amp/hour packs in their ships. Battleships were split with some heavy weights like the North Carolina running 33 amp/hour SLA batteries while other captains have started filling their hulls with 30 amp/hour or more of NiMH batteries. Class 5 battleships and battle cruisers are also mixed; some with two 12 amp/hour batteries or 20 to 30 amp/hour NiMH packs. In general most boats were 6 volts or five cells but some ran six cells to get 7.2 volts. A few boats ran much higher voltages but I don't recall seeing any 12 volt SLA ships this year.

**Hulls** – A combination of scratch build ships and fiberglass hulls were present. My feeling is that there were more fiberglass hulls than scratch built ships. This NATS did have several new scratch built ships; there are still some that prefer the feel of wood over fiberglass.

**Ships** – This year saw warships ranging from as small as 1.5 units to as large as the 8 unit Iowa. The classes of warships represented by models this year were DD, CAE, CL, CA, BC and BB. The only ship classes I did not see were pre-dreadnought, gunboat and monitor. The resulting speed mix was 21, 22, 23, 24, 26 and 28 second ships cruising and puttering around. There were convoy ships from class 2 to 8. This year there was a class 2 Axis convoy but no very large convoy ships. The most unusual ship I observed battling was the protected cruiser HMS Fylgia.

**Props** – There was a large mixture that broke down into two types: older cast props and soldered flat blade props. There was not really a trend. Captain's choice of propeller was generally decided by the age of their inventory. Older captains had cast props while newer captains without parts caches to draw from used soldered props.





## The Lighter Side of NATS

### -Continued-

Another funny series of events came on Wednesday during the cruiser battle.

Towards the end of the third and final sortie Ty decided to try out the ram bow on his tiny 2.5 unit protected cruiser HMS Fylgia on Randy's Jap cruiser and Bob's Montcalm.

After several T-bones he was unable to inflict much damage either because his pointy ram bow was hitting too low or the little 5.36 lb ship just did not have enough mass to punch a hole in anyone. Being out of ammo we talked about pulling the boats off of the water but the rest of us thought it would be fun to play the ram game too. As we were discussing what to do Randy flew in and gave the stationary Fylgia a good shot and Ty proclaimed, "I thought the ram game was over!" As he turned around and headed for another victim he narrowly missed my Italian cruiser however Bob's Montcalm was able to get a good ram on Ty. His ram pushed the ship over instead of causing ram damage to it but it was enough to make the half unit pump light off and

bring the deck dangerously close to awash. Ty said, "Let's see if I can pump out." Just as it looked like he could hang on and pump out Randy sped in, jumped up using his sloped bow and parked on top of the little protected cruiser to sink it. If you haven't seen it yet check out the end of the cruiser battle footage shot from Bob's camera. It was pretty hilarious.

Another case of mistaken identity started on Sunday after testing. As some of you may remember the hotel messed up almost everyone's reservations. I was supposed to room with a couple of the Minnesota guys but ended up on the far end of the hotel and on the second floor. I rode to the pond every day with the Port Polar Bear guys and didn't want to haul all of my stuff from where they parked outside their rooms all the way over to my room. Ron and Peter obliged to let me keep some stuff in their room every night ... for a price of course. It got to be that every morning I looked forward to seeing the 'improvements' they had made to my ship. For instance, my little convoy boat got some Fighting Hellfish

Stickers that Ron had along with some hand drawn details and a bridge crew. Later they put some stickers on the stacks of the Derfflinger.

When they got wet and fell off, the next day he put a blue and starred flag on the stack. At some point on Thursday I had actually managed to properly identify Ty's Warspite and was going in for some shots. As I was approaching him he didn't move so I quickly checked my target to make sure I wasn't lighting up a teammate again but it was Ty and he still wasn't moving. After sending a few salvos in his direction he Ty exclaimed, "Ron, that's me!" He had thought it was Ron's Lion, which to Ty's credit; the Derfflinger does have a similar sleek battle cruiser shape and was flying the same colors in the same location that Ron's Lion used to sport.

I hope you enjoyed the lighter side of NATS from my viewpoint. I look forward to seeing you all again next year and sharing in your intense battling moments as well as your funny little mishaps.



Have you read the rules recently? If so, you might have noticed that the first thing listed are the safety rules. This is because safety is the most important thing we need to focus on. The last thing we need is a major insurance claim due to carelessness as the enjoyment would be gone if we have to think about the guy who lost his eye every time we play. Such a claim would also likely be the end of our insurance and result in dire consequences for the organization.

Overall, as an organization, we need to be mindful of our attention to safety. Take a minute to think about it; when was the last time, at a battle or in your garage, that you violated the safety rules? When was the last time you heard of a CD handing out a safety point penalty for unpinned cannons? Unpinned cannons are the easiest way to let safety slip. CDs should be enforcing the penalties or they get ignored and people become lax regarding safety.

Don't believe that it doesn't happen a lot. I'm to blame for this slip in our safety practice as much as anyone. I was CD at four Regionals this year and did not hand out a single safety penalty. If I saw unpinned cannons in the pits I reminded the captain to pin them. That is not what a CD should do but this is not just a CD issue, it affects us all. It's also not just a rookie problem either as veterans have also been forgetful. Some people have seen unpinned cannons at a battle and not spoke up. As an entire group we need to make it a priority to help each other with our safety issues and to develop good, safe habits.

After you are done battling make sure you pin your cannons at the pond BEFORE returning your ship to the pit area. DO NOT carry your ship back to the pits and then pin your cannons. Conversely, DO NOT unpin your cannons in the pits and then carry your ship to the water. Unpin your cannons once the ship is on shore or actually on the water.

If you are handing your ship to a person in the water make sure your cannons are pinned. I have 'wader duty' at a lot of local battles and there are a lot of cannons pointed at me as I put ships in the water. It makes me nervous! When someone goes into the water point the stern of your cannons away from their path and when the site goes 'range cold' make sure your entire pneumatic system is depressurized and your cannons are pinned.

Don't show up to a battle without holes in your barrels for safety pins. They are called 'safety pins' for a reason. If you need help getting them drilled ask! Make sure you have the safety pins attached to your ship. This is a rule and putting them in your pocket or on your radio is not allowed. That being said, having an extra one on hand is a good idea as they can become lost during battle.

Everyone needs to keep this in mind when you are battling and when you are working on your cannons in your basement or garage. For the 2010 battling season the site hosts and CDs are requested to enforce the safety rules with more vigilance than we have in the past. It is my hope that anyone with safety violation penalties will be ashamed of themselves. Do not get mad at the CD or the reporting captain. It should be second nature to pin and unpin your cannons at the proper time. Develop the habit and it will help us all prevent future grief.

So take some time this winter to make sure your ship and your brain are up to date with the safety rules. When we get to NATS everyone should be in the habit of good safety practices.

2009 MWC President – The Bob

## **TASK FORCE 144**

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**“It is your attitude, and the suspicion that you are maturing the boldest designs against him, that imposes on your enemy.” - Fredrick the Great**