

## **Battle of the Coral Sea**

Background. The Battle of the Coral Sea was sparked by Japanese plans to seize Port Moresby, in eastern New Guinea, and Tulagi, in the Solomons Islands. Both of these moves reflected a strategy of gradually cutting Australia off from the supply and reinforcement routes that lead across the Pacific from the west coast of the United States. American code breaking efforts gave the United States Navy some foreknowledge of Imperial Japanese Navy plans, but not detailed insight into the IJN order of battle and approach routes.

Armed with such knowledge that it could glean, the USN sent a second carrier to reinforce the first that was operating in the anticipated area of operations. Both carriers – the Lexington and the Yorktown – were in position as the IJN's plans swung into motion. The IJN also committed significant carrier forces to its operations, although with the anticipation that they would have to deal with USN carriers only well after the invasion forces had approached their destinations.

With both USN and IJN aircraft carriers cruising the Coral Sea, the stage was set for the first carrier versus carrier battle.

Playing Area (All Scenarios). The scenarios are played out on a hex grid 30 hexes from north to south and 20 hexes from east to west. The northwest corner of the grid is hex 0101. A sample of the grid is attached to this scenario description. Bases and major land masses are located as follows:

Truk – hex 0501

Rabaul – hex 0513

Shortlands – hex 0915

Tulagi – hex 1417

Buna – hex 0217

Lae – hex 0115

Port Moresby – hex 0118

Townsville – hex 0128

Noumea – hex 2030

There are minor islands, controlled by Japan, in hexes 0613, 0714, and 0814. The Allies control minor islands in hexes 1317, 1518, 1617, and 2022. There are uncontrolled minor islands in hexes 0519, 0619 and 0720.

The following hexes are land hexes. TFs may move into these hexes and along them but may not move across them. The island of New Ireland extends from hex 0411 through hex 0512 to hex 0612. The island of New Britain starts in hex 0513 and extends through hexes 0413 and 0314 to hex 0213. The coast of New Guinea runs down hexes 0114, 0115, 0116 and 0117, then through hexes 0217, 0318 and 0418. Hexes 0319, 0218, 0216 and 0118 are also land hexes. TFs may move along land hexes, except that they may only move south or south of the New Guinea peninsula by using the China Straits or Jomard passage or by moving east of hex 0720. Carriers may not operate their aircraft when in land hexes.

China Strait and Jomard Passage. A series of islands and reefs extending southeast from the tail of New Guinea presented hazards to navigation. These islands and reefs can only traversed through two routes: the China Straits and the Jomard Passage. To run through the China Strait, a TF must either begin in hex 0618 and proceed through hex 0519 to hex 0419 or travel that route in reverse. To run through the Jomard Passage, a TF must travel through hexes 0520, 0619 and 0719 in either that order or reverse order. A TF cannot move faster than 2 hexes in the turn in which it moves into hex 0519 or hex 0419. It may only enter either hex during a day turn.

Special Scenario Rule – Weather. Weather during this period was affected by a front moving through the area of operations, resulting in greater than normal instances of missed sighting opportunities and strikes gone awry. Use the following tables rather than the normal weather tables.

Weather in zone is clear:

| Die Roll | Result |
|----------|--------|
| 1-3      | Clear  |
| 4-5      | Cloudy |
| 6        | Stormy |

Weather in zone is cloudy:

| Die Roll | Result |
|----------|--------|
| 1-2      | Clear  |
| 3-4      | Cloudy |
| 5-6      | Stormy |

Weather in zone is stormy:

| Die Roll | Result |
|----------|--------|
| 1        | Clear  |
| 2-4      | Cloudy |
| 5-6      | Stormy |

Initiative. Neither side receives an initiative modifier.

Long Battle. This scenario lasts from April 30, 1942 until one day after the scheduled invasion of Port Moresby.

Scenario Length. 24 turns

Victory Conditions. Standard victory conditions apply. The Japanese player must score at least 50 points or the result is an Allied victory.

Imperial Japanese Navy Order of Battle.

Within 8 hexes of Truk:

Carriers: Shokaku, Zuikaku, Shoho

Heavy Cruisers: Myoko, Haguro, Aoba, Kinugasa, Furutaka, Kako

Destroyers: 2 x Fubuki, 1 x Shiratsuyu, 1 x Hatsuharu

Air Units:

Shokaku: 2 A6M2, 2 D3A1, 2 B5N2

Zuikaku: 2 A6M2, 2 D3A1, 2 B5N2

Shoho: 1 A6M2, 1 A5M4, 1 B5N2 (8T)

At Rabaul:

Light Cruisers: Yubari, Tenryu, Tatsuta

Destroyers: 4 x Mutsuki, 1 x Kamikaze

Other: 1 x MS/SC Group, 1 x MS Group, Okinoshima, Tsugaru, Kamikawa Maru, Akibasan Maru, Asakasan Maru, Azumasan Maru, Chowa Maru, China Maru, Mito Maru, Mogamigawa Maru, Shoka Maru, Hibi Maru, Matsue Maru, Taifuku Maru, Goyo Maru, Keijo Maru, Seikai Maru, Nikkai Maru, Hoyo Maru

Air Group: 5 A6M2, 4 G3M2, 1 G4M1

At Lae:

Air Group: 2 A6M2

At Buna:

Air Group: 1 G3M2

At Shortlands:

Air Group: 1 F1M2

Submarines: 1 block, within 6 hexes of hex 0618

Imperial Japanese Navy Scenario Rules.

1. Carrier strike limits. Air strikes from IJN carriers are subject to limits.
  - a. Any strike from Zuikaku or Shokaku is limited in size to 5 air units, no more than 3 of which may be bombing units.
  - b. Any strike from Shoho is limited to 2 air units, no more than 1 of which may be a bombing unit.
  - c. A “bombing unit” is any air unit with a P, M or A attack strength. A carrier may launch more than 1 air strike in an air strike phase.
2. Optional Order of Battle. The IJN player can elect to receive carrier Kaga in lieu of Shokaku and Zuikaku. The IJN player receives 50 VPs if this election is made. The Kaga has the following air group: 2 A6M2, 2 D3A1, 3 B5N2. It is subject to the same restrictions on strike size as Shokaku and Zuikaku.
3. Port Moresby and Tulagi Landings. The IJN player receives VPs for unloading transports in the Port Moresby and Tulagi hexes. This represents landings at those two bases. The IJN player receives VPs equal to the cargo ratings of the transports successfully unloaded. The IJN player can receive up to 15 VP for transports unloaded at Tulagi and up to 69 VP for transports unloaded at Port Moresby. The IJN player must unload at least 18 VP at Port Moresby to receive any VP for unloading there, and must unload at least 5 VP at Tulagi to receive any VP for unloading there. The IJN player must announce the number of VP unloaded at each location as they are unloaded.
4. Port Moresby Assault. While the Japanese met no resistance at Tulagi, Port Moresby was defended by about 5000 Australian troops. As a result, the IJN player must roll to see if the forces landed there are successful in taking Port Moresby and its airfields. Roll beginning on the turn after VPs are landed at Port Moresby. Roll D12. If 18-35 VP have been landed, the assault succeeds on a roll of 3 or less. If 36-54 VP have been landed, the assault succeeds on a roll of 4 or less. If more than 54 VP have been landed, the assault succeeds on a roll of 6 or less. Roll at the start of each turn until either the assault succeeds or the game ends.
5. Long Range Search Units. The IJN player receives 2 H6K4 units. These provide search capability for any 2 bases, including Rabaul, Buna and Shortlands. In addition, the IJN

player can base 1 of these units at Tulagi at any time at least 3 turns after the IJN completes unloading at least 5 VP of cargo there. No base other than Rabaul can have more than 1 of these units based at it. These units may not strike and may not be attacked. These units may not search in a turn in which they are being transferred from 1 base to another. They may change bases during night turns.

6. F1M2 Basing. The F1M2 air unit based at the Shortlands and can fly to Tulagi at any time on or after the turn that the IJN player completes unloading at least 5 VP of transports there.
7. Kamikawa Maru Searches. The Kamikawa Maru can search from any island hex not controlled by the Allied player, but must be stationary in the hex to search.
8. Fighters for Rabaul. The (R) A6M2 unit begins on board either Shokaku or Zuikaku (or Kaga, if she is in the order of battle), at the IJN player's option. The USN player receives 10 VP unless the IJN player flies this unit to Rabaul. The unit cannot be used for carrier CAP or strike operations. It cannot be flown to Rabaul on any turn in which Rabaul's weather is stormy.
9. Rabaul CAP. The IJN player must always retain 1 A6M unit at Rabaul as CAP.
10. Gunboats. Keijo, Nikkai, and Seikai Marus are cargo ships converted to gunboats. Each is worth 2 VP if sunk.
11. Refueling Points. The IJN player may designate 3 hexes anywhere north of hexrow xx18 as refueling rendezvous. If the optional fueling rules are used, each refueling point has 5000 tons of fuel available. Unlimited fuel is available at Rabaul, but TFs containing Zuikaku, Shokaku or Kaga may not refuel there.
12. Fuel Use. IJN ships beginning within 4 hexes of Truk have used 1 turn of endurance. IJN ships beginning within 8 hexes of Truk have used 2 turns of endurance. If the optional fuel rules are used, all IJN ships beginning within a stated distance of Truk are assumed to have used 2 turns of endurance at 4 hexes per turn.
13. Movement Restrictions. No IJN ship can approach within 4 hexes of Noumea.
14. TFs and Dummies. The IJN player can have up to 15 TF blocks in play, any number of which may be dummies. The IJN player receives the following dummy ships: 1♥, 3♠, 3♦.
15. Placing Blocks. The IJN player places submarine and TF blocks before the USN player.

### Allied Order of Battle.

Within 3 hexes of Noumea:

Carrier: Yorktown

Heavy Cruisers: Astoria, Chester, Portland

Destroyers: 3 x Sims

Air group:

Yorktown: 2 F4F-3, 3 SBD-3, 1 SBD-2, 2 TBD-1

At Noumea:

Other: Tangier

At Port Moresby:

Air units: 3 P-39D, 2 B-26C, 1 B-25B

Arriving Turn 2, on the east edge of the map on or south of xx26:

Carrier: Lexington

Heavy Cruisers: New Orleans, Minneapolis, Chicago

Destroyers: Phelps, 3 x Farragut

Air group:

Lexington: 2 F4F-3, 3 SBD-3, 1 SBD-2, 2 TBD-1

Arriving Turn 8, on south edge of map:

Heavy cruiser: Australia

Light cruiser: Hobart

Submarines: 2 blocks (with speed 2), within 6 hexes of Rabaul.

### Allied Scenario Rules.

1. Carrier strike limits. Air strikes from USN carriers are subject to limits. Any P weapon bombing units in excess of 3 launched by a carrier in a single strike must be units with 2P attack strengths.
2. SBD Bombsights. SBD air units in strikes are subject to a +1 modifier to their attack die rolls, reflecting difficulties with fogging bombsights.

3. SBD CAP. The US player may elect to use SBD air units as CAP. SBD-3 units have a strength of 3F and a defense of 3 when used as CAP. SBD-2 units have a strength of 2F and a defense of 2.
4. B-17 Searches. The search aircraft based at Townsville may attack 1 of the spotted ships in each TF they contact with a 3H attack. They must roll 1 on D12 to make the attack. Roll for each spotted TF separately and select the attacked ship randomly, based on the cards dealt during the search.
5. PBY Searches. The Tangier operates its search aircraft from Noumea.
6. Air Search Modifiers. All air searches from Tulagi, Townsville and Port Moresby are subject to a -1 modifier, in addition to all other modifiers.
7. B-25 and B-26 Basing. The B-25 and B26 units at Port Moresby are using the base as a shuttle stop. As a consequence:
  - a. These units may only strike in the third air strike phase.
  - b. These units are not present at Port Moresby until the third air strike phase.
  - c. If the Japanese assault on Port Moresby succeeds, these units are not lost. Instead, they become based on Horn Island, a base off the western edge of the map from which they can strike at any unit within 2 hexes of Port Moresby.
8. B-25 and B-26 Attacks. When B-25 or B-26 units attack a TF, use the following procedure. The IJN player takes all of the ship counters from the TF and flips them upside down. The Allied player then indicated which counters the bombers will attack. The identity of the counter to be attacked is then revealed. Each bomber unit attacks a separate counter.
9. Radar. All US bases have radar.
10. Refueling Points. The Allied player can designate 2 hexes south of hex row xx21 as refueling rendezvous. In addition, Allied ships may refuel at Noumea. If the optional fueling rules are used, fuel from Refueling Point A can be made available at that refueling point's designated hex or at Noumea.
11. Fuel Use. The ships starting within 3 hexes of Noumea have used 4 turns of endurance. The ships arriving on Turn 2 have used 2 turns of endurance. Australia and Hobart have used 6 turns of endurance.
12. Movement Restrictions. No Allied surface ship may approach within 9 hexes of Truk or 4 hexes of Rabaul.



13. TFs and Dummies. The Allied player may have up to 15 TF blocks in play, any number of which may be dummies. The Allied player may have 1 dummy TF composed entirely of dummy ships. The Allied player receives as dummy ships 4 ♠, 2 ♥ and 4 ♦.
14. Placing Blocks. The Allied player places submarine and TF blocks after the IJN player.

Short Battle. This scenario lasts from May 7 through May 9. It begins after the IJN occupation of Tulagi and the USN strike on the IJN occupation forces there.

Scenario Length. 6 turns.

Victory Conditions. Standard victory conditions apply. The IJN player starts with 10 VP.

Imperial Japanese Navy Order of Battle.

North of hexrow xx19 or east of hexrow 10xx:

Carriers: Shokaku, Zuikaku

Heavy Cruisers: Myoko, Haguro

Destroyers: 1 x Shiratsuyu, 1 x Hatsuharu

Air Units:

Shokaku: 2 A6M2, 2 D3A1, 2 B5N2

Zuikaku: 2 A6M2, 2 D3A1, 2 B5N2

Within 1 hex of hex 0618:

Carrier: Shoho

Heavy Cruisers: Aoba, Kinugasa, Furutaka, Kako

Light Cruisers: Yubari, Tenryu, Tatsuta

Destroyers: 2 x Fubuki, 4 x Mutsuki, 1 x Kamikaze

Other: 1 x MS Group, Tsugaru, Kamikawa Maru, Akibasan Maru, Asakasan Maru, Chowa Maru, China Maru, Mito Maru, Mogamigawa Maru, Shoka Maru, Hibi Maru, Matsue Maru, Taifuku Maru, Goyo Maru, Keijo Maru, Seikai Maru, Nikkai Maru, Hoyo Maru

Air Units:

Shoho: 1 A6M2, 1 A5M4, 1 B5N2 (8T)

At Rabaul:

Air Group: 6 A6M2 (including the "(R)" unit), 4 G3M2, 1 G4M1

At Lae:

Air Group: 2 A6M2

At Buna:

Air Group: 1 G3M2

Submarines: 1 block, within 6 hexes of hex 0618

Imperial Japanese Navy Scenario Rules.

1. All scenario rules from the Long Battle scenario apply, with the following exceptions.
  - a. The landings at Tulagi have already occurred. The IJN player receives 10 VP for those landings, and may use Tulagi as a base.
  - b. The IJN player and the USN player alternate placing TF blocks, with the IJN player placing the first block. In one player is placing more blocks than the other, he or she places the remainder of those blocks after the other player.
2. Due to the short duration of this scenario, the endurance rules are not used.

### Allied Order of Battle.

Within 6 hexes of hex 0921:

Carriers: Lexington, Yorktown

Heavy Cruisers: New Orleans, Minneapolis, Chicago, Australia, Astoria, Chester, Portland

Light Cruiser: Hobart

Destroyers: Phelps, 3 x Farragut, 3 x Sims

Air groups:

Lexington: 2 F4F-3, 3 SBD-3, 1 SBD-2, 2 TBD-1

Yorktown: 2 F4F-3, 3 SBD-3, 1 SBD-2, 2 TBD-1

At Noumea:

Other: Tangier

At Port Moresby:

Air units: 3 P-39D, 1 B-25C, 2 B-26B

Submarines: 2 blocks (with speed 2), within 6 hexes of Rabaul.

### Allied Scenario Rules.

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Outcome. Bad weather and creaky administrative structures contributed to untimely, inaccurate and confusing sighting reports and so to a confused series of actions. The IJN had not expected to find USN carriers in the operating area and so was surprised when the Yorktown mounted a strike against the Tulagi invasion force on May 4. Once alerted, the big IJN carriers pursued their quarry into the Coral Sea, but failed to sight the USN force. The USN thought that it had located the IJN fleet carriers on May 7, but found its carriers striking the Shoho instead. At least the USN destroyed a carrier on that day; Shokaku and Zuikaku launched full strikes against a USN oiler group thinking that it was the USN carrier force. May 8 saw that first carrier on carrier battle where strikes were exchanged. At battle's end the honors were close to even, with the IJN sinking Lexington and hitting Yorktown while the USN knocked Shokaku out of the war for 3 months and savaged Zuikaku's air group. Perhaps more importantly, the IJN withdrew the Port Moresby invasion force to Rabaul. Neither Shokaku nor Zuikaku would engage in the next great carrier battle, the Battle of Midway. But the Yorktown would.

