

How to play with Panzerzugs

By Steve Brown (with additional commentary by Peter Stone, aka Badpanzer)



1. The Panzerzug concept:

Panzerzugs are armored trains. The basic concept behind designing a Panzerzug campaign is to set all hexes on a map that are railways to “Port” terrain and give the trains naval movement of various kinds. This means that your core will consist of units that can move on railways, some must stay on the rails all the time but others can unload from their rail cars and exit to fight elsewhere on the map.

2. Unit types:

In the *Panzerzug!* Campaign you have four basic types of units:

a. Pure rail units. These are units that can only ever be deployed and travel on railways (such as artillery, air defense and anti-tank cars). A special type of unit is the “Command Car” which in the *Panzerzug!* Campaign has Combat Support capability and Reconnaissance Movement.

b. Units requiring transport (except tanks and recons). The Panzerzug has a number of units available in the AD, AT, Infantry and Artillery classes that are normal ground units. These units are vital because none of the scenarios are winnable without them. For these units to be transportable on the railway tracks you have to “buy” rail transport for them, just like buying trucks for other PG2 units (there are a few different railway car transports available). Once a unit has rail car transport it will automatically load itself onto its rail transport if the unit can reach the railway tracks during its normal movement; just like with trucks.

c. Units requiring transport (tanks and recons). Tanks and Recon units are treated differently by the game because they cannot have transport assigned to them. The Panzerzug *can* carry its tanks and armoured cars by using a special “tank transport” unit. To load a tank or armoured car onto your Panzerzug you have to start a turn on the railway tracks, then use the “embark/disembark” button to load the tank into its transports and do the reverse to unload the tank. Transporting tanks and armoured cars works exactly like sea transports for other nations.

d. Bombers. You also have a ground support bomber available. Panzerzugs did not have their own dedicated bombers, but this is just something added for fun - you do not have to buy one if you do not want to...





3. Moving the Panzerzugs:

Panzerzug units are moved like any other PG2 units except a pure rail unit or transported unit is restricted to the railway tracks. Many battles will be away from the railway tracks, so you have to use your ground units to perform these operations and sometimes lure enemy units closer to the train (to be in range of your artillery cars, for example).

There is no way to keep the rail cars joined together, nor is there any requirement that you do so.

4. Bugs and other useful information:

a. Scuttling. One little-known rule in PG2 is that naval units (ships and naval transports) in ports sometimes get “scuttled” (they spontaneously blow up), usually when adjacent to an enemy unit - this is a very rare thing to happen and even players of many years have never experienced scuttling, yet it exists. For Panzerzugs, tanks and recons in transports (see 2c, above) are naval transport units and I have sometimes seen these units spontaneously explode during a turn (but only when being transported). The only way I know around this is to either reload the turn and move the “scuttled” unit or reload the scenario from the start. For that reason I suggest you keep a saved game at the start of a scenario. Of course, you can also treat the loss as an unfortunate consequence of war. Whatever you decide I *do not* consider reloading the turn or scenario to get around this bug to be cheating.

b. Sailing auxiliary units on the railway and sailing Panzerzug units on rivers. Since railways are ports, any auxiliary unit with the ability to be transported by sea can, if it starts on a railway hex, load into a sea transport and “sail” on the railways in a sea transport. Since you have many auxiliary German units in this campaign you can do this in almost every scenario - this is considered cheating so please do not do it. In addition, it is possible to sail Panzerzug units on rivers (since they have “coastal” movement) or even the ocean if they move to a real Port, which is fun but is also cheating.

c. Loading units into railcar transports when not on railway tracks. You can actually load your units onto their rail car transport anywhere on a map - although when you move you will move by foot. The only reason you would do this is to provide extra protection for your unit when under attack. This is also considered cheating.

d. Game scale. Typically PG2 scenarios are normally at a scale of around 2KM per hex (although it varies). The scale in the Panzerzug! Campaign is much smaller - although it varies. Think of tanks as individual tanks, aircraft as single aircraft, infantry as squads and artillery and AT as single guns etc. etc.

5. Purchasing hints:

You should buy a variety of units.

You will need units such as infantry, tanks and light artillery that can move off the railway tracks but you will also need the heavier railway cars (particularly artillery and air defense cars). In fact, without the artillery and AA cars many scenarios are not winnable (see Tactics, below). The first few scenarios only have relatively weak artillery cars (and no air defense cars) but after you get to 1942 you will have some good units to buy. I recommend you have AT LEAST two artillery cars (plus one or more mortar teams) and one air defense car. You should also have a good selection of other units including at least 3 or more infantry units.

6. Tactics:

The ***Panzerzug!*** campaign requires you to use tactics appropriate to a Panzerzug...

If you play this campaign like most campaigns (that is, just move your units forward to the victory hexes) then in many cases you will often be massacred. In the first 4 scenarios you can play conventionally but after that your train will be protecting railway lines and often will be fighting against some strong enemies... so strong that they may seem unbeatable. What you have to do is advance cautiously and try to lure enemies close to the train where you can destroy them with your heavy artillery (all the while protecting your units with your AA cars since roving Soviet bombers are always looking for trains to attack).

Some scenarios may seem almost impossible to win - but in fact they are winnable (although they often are tough) if you play correctly. Please remember that there are good and bad ways to use all units (for example it is risky to send your tanks unprotected into a city) and the Panzerzug is no exception. You need to use the superior firepower of your rail cars but they have limited range - so if in doubt, let the enemies come to you.

I hope you enjoy playing this campaign as much as I did making it!!

7. Tips of the trade - by "Badpanzer":



Hello everyone.

As I was one of the playtesters involved with the PanzerZug#3 campaign Steve has asked me if I would like to give a few hints on core design and tactics. I think that its a good idea as the Panzerzug campaign is quite different from the norm.

Firstly, core design. Sooner or later you should acquire a mortar, sometimes its important to be able to operate out of range of the rail artillery. Also to be really successful you will need 2xartillery cars as well. There is a variety available as time passes.

Air defence is an absolute must as the Red airforce swiftly becomes a real threat. Again a variety of types are available, it's worth pointing out that ADmg's and 20mmAD's can fire very effectively at ground targets. The ADmg is a very dangerous weapon against inf.

AT is also important and I would strongly suggest having 2xunits by the later ops. The towed guns have a range of 2 like most weapons in this e-file but again the best AT comes later in the campaign.

The Command car gives combat support so always try to get exp for it if you can. If you buy one, I believe that they're worth it (*note from Steve: there is one in your original core*).

The inf are a mixed bag. The Aufklärer are cheap scouts with very poor stats they need very careful handling. While the flamers have engineering and firepower but no defence. The reg inf are the best all rounders though quite expensive. Its important to realise that you dont have to buy transport for your inf straight away if you dont want to and I would not buy transport for aufklärer at all(also inf does not dismount when attacked). Tanks and recons can also use rail transport and they can still fight while mounted.

The Zug is best seen as a mobile fortress surrounded by the enemy, in most cases you are. Always keep your units under the protection of the main arty and AD guns on the train. If you do not they will die. Russia is a dangerous place for a German train. Partisans are everywhere and the enemy airforce will actively seek you out. Try to *avoid* Blitzkrieg tactics, imo a slow and steady approach works best. Allow the enemy to bleed themselves dry on your defences then launch your counterstroke, if all goes well you will have your victory. (*note from Steve: this paragraph emphasised by me for a good reason...*)



On a final note I tested this at 100% and found that a BV was achievable in every operation. If you play at less than 100% you will certainly find this tough going. Good Luck, Have Fun, and Play Clean.

Cheers Peter Stone Aka "Badpanzer"

Note: Photographs in this document are all of Panzerzug 3