

# The Victory Track

## ***Issue #2: The New Squadron***

Gameplay – Jay Waschak  
Commentary – Charles Lewis

*Welcome to the second issue of the Victory Track! Here we walk through the games produced by VBAM Games, Inc.*



Each famous squadron has some humble beginning. Whether some former pilots decided to try their luck outside the formal military, or a local dictator funding his regime by selling off his pilots and their old equipment, every MAS starts somewhere. In this issue of the Victory Track we explore creating a new squadron, and what that means for the game.

After the UN officially allowed mercenary units to be formed and legally contracted throughout the world, there was a sudden rush of new groups trying to fill the demand. Most failed, but some survived. Those who did would create a tremendous new demand for after market military surplus from major countries and tin pot dictatorships, even driving the sale of some high quality military hardware.

Every MAS in the basic set-up starts on a pretty even footing. In this example we create the Sky Raptors™, a relative mediocre group of pilots lead by none other than Colonel Archibald “Ransom” Pier, an aging military pilot tired of collecting his government pension. He was joined by a reluctant failure, Karen “The Moose” Gajeski, who will serve as the XO of the new squadron.

The rule to pay attention to here is **1.4 Player Options** in the main MAS rulebook. Since MAS is built to be played in a variety of ways with a varying number of players it is important to know who is playing, and what role they want. For instance if we had several friends interested in flying in the same squadron, we could use **1.4.2.1 Single MAS, Single Character** and let everyone “play” a character in the squadron. However we will use the most popular method here, which is **1.4.1 Single Player Mode** so we can create a pretty open ended squadron which we can solo game, or use later with our friends. The only real difference is the player is running an entire MAS, instead of a single pilot.

*Charlie: 1.4.1 Single Player Mode is where most players operate. Having full control of a MAS gives a player the total experience. Personally, I find it the most enjoyable and rewarding way to play the game.*



Each MAS has a pretty standard set up. So I grab my Organizer, which is a general tracking sheet for a squadron. It has everything really worth tracking on a squadron level, and can be printed for face to face games, or run in a spreadsheet program if the player prefers to run the game from a computer (PBEM is a very popular way of playing MAS). We write the down starting assets for the 1 player game, which is:

## Starting Player Assets

# of Players	Starting Planes	Starting Cash
1	2 F-4 Phantoms	\$20
2	3 F-4 Phantoms	\$30
3	2 MiG-21s, 2 F-4 Phantoms	\$35
4	2 MiG-21s, 3 F-4 Phantoms	\$40

There has been some discussion about adding variations to new games. Well most experienced MAS players are able to gauge what the best set up is for their players. We did include some rules to change around the starting planes in the main book found in the Optional Rule section, **7.9 Random Starting**. This gives the player a chance to start with a less stable craft than the F-4 Phantom, such as the MiG-17. There is also the prospect to get a craft like the Foxbat or the Intruder, too.

So, the Sky Raptors get two F-4 Phantoms! Not a bad start for a green Mercenary Air Squadron. In Single Player Mode we also start with a solid four pilots, which we will discuss below. What is important to note here is that each pilot “brings” some starting extra inventory with him or her above that of the starting \$20 and two planes. This is 2 Apex, 2 Aphid, and 2 MK-82 bombs each to help pad the squadron’s inventory.

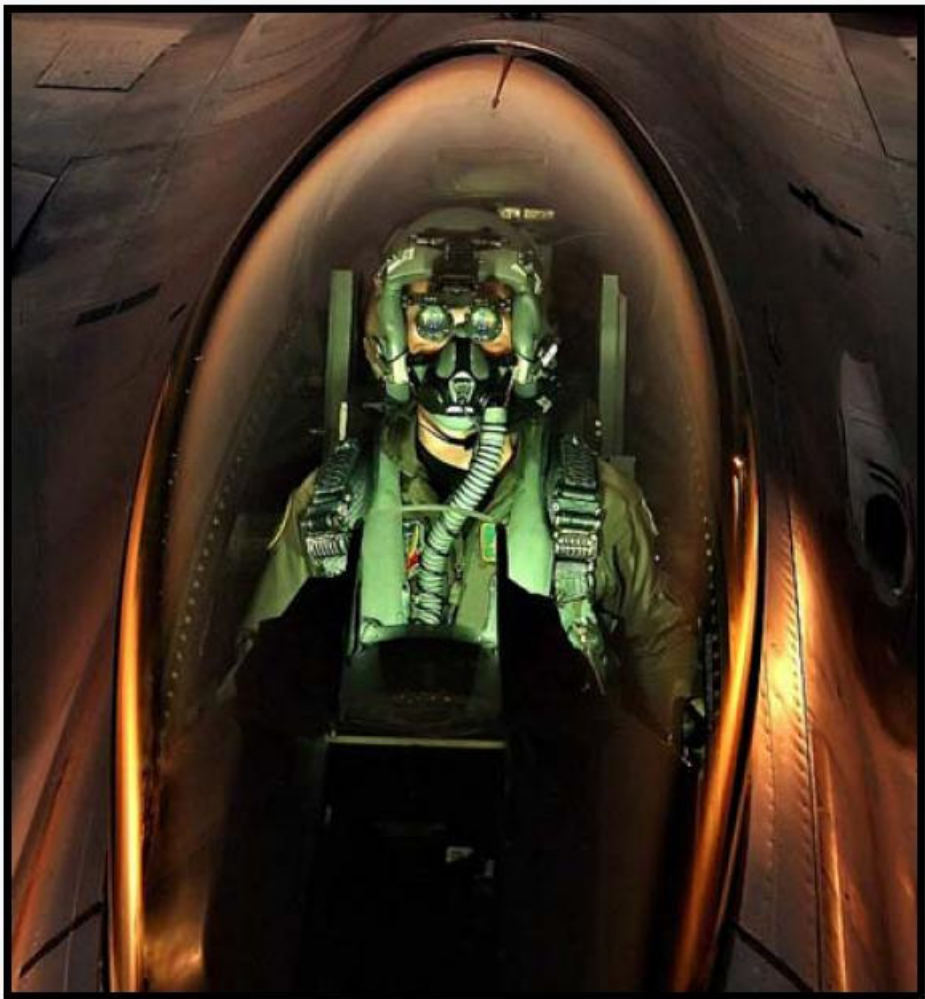
Inventory	Count
AA-7 Apex	8
AA-8 Aphid	8
MK-82 500lbs Bomb	8

Next we start creating our pilots following along with section **2.2 Generating New Pilots**. The new organization is going to start with one very experienced officer, the CO, another fairly experienced second in command, and then two rookie pilots. Every pilot starts with experience points which can be spent to bump up certain skills, and then unique attributes, which will give them a distinct “quirk” about the pilot. Every pilot starts with 3 experience points, with a CO bonus of 3 more experience for the squadron commander Colonel Pier starts with 3, and 1 extra experience

point for the XO, Karen Gajesky. After assigning names to the rookies, the pilot roster looks a little like this:

Pilot Summary			
Rank	Pilot	Callsign	Exp
Colonel	Archibald Pier	Ransom	6
Lt. Colonel	Karen Gajesky	The Moose	4
Lieutenant	William Braddock	Fireball	3
Lieutenant	Sam Wittine	Aristotle	3
Total			16

Now we can start assigning skills to the pilots!





ight balance. You have  
ight skills to make it ha  
quadron. Having two p  
make those decisions  
one who can protect  
will have pretty weak  
missions under our b  
w skills that work for a  
rules already may not  
popular stand-off weap  
ere are the close engag  
d engage. The multipu  
a. What we need to re

s that wor

at we need

The F-4 is the work horse of the starting MAS. It has decent cannon weapons, and can handle itself in most early air-to-air engagements with confidence. However it is weak at Maneuvering, which means it has to rely on the power of its engines in a scrap.

So what does this mean for “Ransom”? First, I am going to spend a few points on “low hanging fruit”. The -2 to -1 skill update only costs 1 experience, which is a bargain. With 6 experience we can pick up some important skills and still specialize a bit.

### *Skill Improvement Costs*

Old Value	New Value	Experience Point Cost
-2	-1	1 Exp
-1	0	2 Exp
0	1	3 Exp
1	2	4 Exp
2	3	5 Exp
3+	X+1	7 Exp

My first choice will be to bump up his Initiative skill from -2 to -1. That will only cost us 1 experience point, and gives us a good start to any pilot. With 5 experience left I still have some choices. I will buy single skill advances in Cannons and Maneuver, and then spend 3 experience to get AtA (Heat) up to 0. This gives him a slight jump on the initial engagement order (Initiative), some skills I hope to bump up long term (Maneuver), and some firing skills (AtA(Heats) and Cannons). I had debated going with RADAR skills instead, but I have a feeling that in the early missions he won't get much of a chance to use the more expensive stand off weapons.

Now we get to pick a field to generate a Unique Attribute. Remember that the CO and XO of the squadron get an extra unique attribute in either the Administration, Leadership, or Miscellaneous categories.

I opt to use my regular Unique Attribute in Air to Air Combat, and my CO bonus unique attribute for Administration. I roll a D20 in each category and get the following.

*Charlie: Something I have experimented with in the past and had decent success with is using the Optional Specialization Rules and spending 5 of my CO's 6 starting Experience Points to specialize in his initial aircraft. The bonuses across the board are quite nice, though it is something of “short-term gain” but “long-term loss.” Early on, though, it can make a big difference in getting your MAS off the ground.*

#### Air to Air Combat

Result: 11

**Accurate** – Player adds 1 to all air combat target rolls for one mission per campaign.

#### Administration

Result 19

**Enjoy Your Moment** – Pilot may double any one pilot's experience points earned from a mission once per campaign

*Charlie: This is a great trait to have in a squadron, as it can be used to quickly ramp up a new pilot, or maximize the value of a pilot after a really great mission.*

Unique Attributes are the flavor of a squadron, and often their use is what sets them apart from their opponents. A good commander knows when to take advantage of a pilot's unique abilities.

Pilot			
Pilot Name:	Archibald Pier	Total Experience	
Callsign:	"Ransom		6
Squadron:	Sky Raptors		
Skills:			
	Initiative:	-1	
	Climb:	-2	
	Evasive:	-2	
	Manuever	-1	
	Dive:	-2	
	Afterburner	-2	
	Cannons:	-1	
	AtA (Heat):	0	
	AtA (IR):	-2	
	AtG (Unguided)	-2	
	AtG (Guided)	-2	
Unspent Experience:			
		0	
Combat Level:	Regular		
Unique Attribute:			
	Accurate		
	Enjoy Your Moment		



This rounds out our squadron leader. Next, it's time to move on to the XO, Karen Gajesky. For her skill set I plan to build someone who can handle the ground pounding role we will inevitably need. It is likely some AAA will be spotted, not to mention some sort of mission objective like a bridge or bunker.

I choose unguided bombs, since they are economical and a good fit for the organization early in the game. I also opt for the Air to Ground Combat Unique Attribute (and Leadership for her XO bonus). Here is the result.

Pilot			
Pilot Name:	Karen Gajesky	Total Experience	
Callsign:	"The Moose"		4
Squadron:	Sky Raptors		
Skills:			
	Initiative:	-1	
	Climb:	-2	
	Evasive:	-2	
	Manuever	-2	
	Dive:	-1	
	Afterburner	-2	
	Cannons:	-1	
	AtA (Heat):	-2	
	AtA (IR):	-2	
	AtG (Unguided)	-1	
	AtG (Guided)	-2	
Unspent Experience:		0	
Combat Level:	Regular		
Unique Attribute:			
	Elusive		
	Friends Across the Pond		

The dive skill will help her out in most ground attack rolls, not to mention how convenient and economical it is to be able to strafe a target with cannon fire as needed. This sets her up well for most ground attack aircraft that come down the line. Her Leaderships unique attribute, Friends Across the Pond will be nice when we need to pick up nice equipment later.

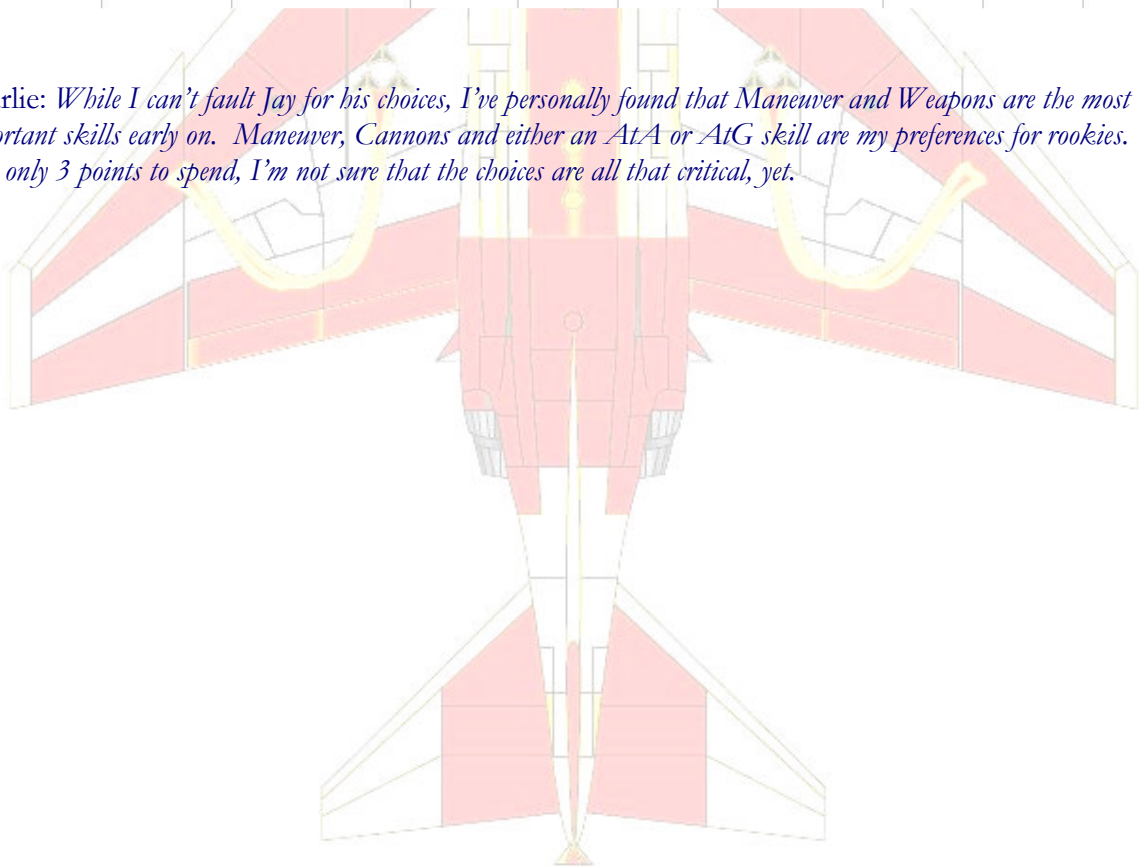




I finish out the last two pilots with some basic starts. I will need to see how they do in the first few missions to see how I will ultimately develop them.

Pilot				Pilot			
Pilot Name:	William Braddock	Total Experience		Pilot Name:	Sam Wittine	Total Experience	
Callsign:	"Fireball"		4	Callsign:	"Aristotle"		4
Squadron:	Sky Raptors			Squadron:	Sky Raptors		
Skills:				Skills:			
	Initiative:	-2			Initiative:	-1	
	Climb:	-2			Climb:	-2	
	Evasive:	-1			Evasive:	-2	
	Manuever	-1			Manuever	-1	
	Dive:	-2			Dive:	-2	
	Afterburner	-2			Afterburner	-1	
	Cannons:	-2			Cannons	-2	
	AtA (Heat):	-2			AtA (Heat)	-1	
	AtA (IR):	-1			AtA (IR):	-2	
	AtG (Unguided)	-2			AtG (Unguided)	-2	
	AtG (Guided)	-2			AtG (Guided)	-2	
Unspent Experience:		0		Unspent Experience:		0	
Combat Level:	Green			Combat Level:	Green		
Unique Attribute:				Unique Attribute:			
	Wingman				Survivor		

Charlie: *While I can't fault Jay for his choices, I've personally found that Maneuver and Weapons are the most important skills early on. Maneuver, Cannons and either an AtA or AtG skill are my preferences for rookies. But with only 3 points to spend, I'm not sure that the choices are all that critical, yet.*



Now we know who is flying, and in what! So where to start? Well, most new MASs should really cut their teeth on the Introduction Campaign. This gives those rookie pilots a chance to get some skills, and the MAS a chance to get a new aircraft before moving along too far.

There are a few financial things to consider before starting as well. Some of that inventory can be sold if needed. It is very important to have enough cash on hand to activate the planes (luckily the F-4 is fairly cheap to maintain and fly) and pay the pilots. You don't want some fighter jockey sitting around and collecting a check for doing nothing so manage the roster carefully. The money for the first mission will probably go for activations, and possibly some extra ordnance.



Stay tuned for the next issue of the Victory Track in which we will explore the early missions and development of the Sky Raptors. We will also be featuring a preview for the World War Two Era MAS Mediterranean Expansion.

