

The Victory Track

Issue #3: The New Squadron

Commentary – Charles Lewis

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



In anticipation of the new expansion *Mercenary Air Squadron - WWII: Mediterranean Theater of Operations* this edition of *The Victory Track* will feature Charlie Lewis's campaign journal from his adventures with Squadrigilia Vizzini.

Squadriglia Vizzini Campaign Log

As part of my final round of playtesting, I'm going to create an Italian MAS and run through some campaigns. The bonus for you, the reader, is that you get to follow along! While I won't be detailing nuts and bolts of the combats of the individual missions, you will get an overview of how the missions go and you'll get to see the decisions I make between missions and why. Along the way, you'll hopefully get a feel for how MAS-WWII works in terms of the big picture.

During our play tests, Commonwealth and German squadrons were the most popular, not least because of the easier access to a large assortment of aircraft. In spite of that, Italian bombers were quite popular, offset by the fact that Italian fighters are lightly armed. Partly as an experiment, I've decided to build an Italian MAS to see if such a beast can be competitive without crossing over and getting German fighters. It'll also serve as the foundation for a third rival organization for the final rules.

The Squadriglia Vizzini was created by Spanish Civil War veteran Enrico Vizzini shortly before the outbreak of hostilities in Europe. Intended originally to work for Franco, the arrival of general war in Europe meant that Vizzini broadened his horizons. Knowing the general state of affairs in the *Regio Aeronautica*, he promptly offered the services of his squadron to the Italian government, putting his flyers on the front lines when Italy joined Germany in its war against France.



MAS Creation

Starting with the two C.R. 32 biplane fighters and one B.R. 20 bomber, Enrico would dearly love to get his hands on some Re.2000s, but they are still too new to be bought by a lowly mercenary commander. What he *can* get are some C.R.42 Falcos! He buys two of those and a pair of S.M.79 Sparviers. The Sparviero is one of the best bombers available anywhere, and he can get them for a song. Having spent \$38 of his initial \$60, he banks the last \$22, and then adds \$4 for his seed money. Hopefully, once he has a contract, he'll have access to better aircraft. Essentially, I've bought the planes I need to fulfill the first mission of the first campaign, went ahead and grabbed some excellent bombers, and am looking forward to purchases prior to my *second* mission.

[Note: my second choice would have been some M.C.200 Saettas, but in June, 1940, they are still withheld, and thus out of reach for a starting MAS to buy. My third choice, the G.50 Freccia, is still too new, as it is less than a year old in June of 1940.]

Squadriglia Vizzini Inventory				
<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Activation Cost</u>	<u>Bombload</u>	<u>Ceiling</u>	<u>Fuel</u>
C.R. 42 Falco	1	n/a	High	7
C.R. 42 Falco	1	n/a	High	7
C.R. 32	1	Very Light	Medium	7
C.R. 32	1	Very Light	Medium	7
S.M.79 Sparviero	3	Medium	Low	19
S.M.79 Sparviero	3	Medium	Low	19
B.R.20	2	Medium	Medium	30

Now it's time for some pilots. For a one player MAS, I get 6 pilots.

Enrico Vizzini is a seasoned pilot, and he's been flying Italian planes in combat for some time. As the CO, he has 9 XP to spend. He'll spend 3 XP to raise his Maneuverability skill to 0, 3 XP to raise Initiative to 0, and the other 3 XP will raise his AtA Gunnery skill to 0. His bonus trait is Leadership 10; Ground Spotters.

Diego Montoya is a long-time comrade of Enrico's from his days in Spain fighting for Franco. He puts 3 of his 7 XP into AtA Gunnery, and raises his Maneuverability skill to -1. His bonus trait as XO is Administration 18. Got an In at the Quartermasters.

Sara Benito is an old flame of Enrico's and is a good bomber pilot. She has Level Bombing at 0, Evasion and Maneuverability at -1, and all other skills at -2. She had 5 XP total to spend.

Julio Rossini, another experienced hand, shows some promise as a fighter pilot.

Mario Drago, and Luigi Balbo are recent new-hires. Mario could be a decent fighter pilot someday, and Luigi shows some talent with larger aircraft.

Pilot	MAS Rank	Combat Rating	XP	Mission Salary	Unique Traits	Skills
Enrico Vizzini, CO	Captain	Regular	9	\$2	Ldr 10	0 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery -2 – AtG Gunnery, Evasion, Climb, Dive, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Diego Montoya, XO	Captain	Regular	7	\$2	Admin 18	0 – AtA Gunnery -1 – Maneuverability -2 – Initiative, Climb, Dive, Evasion, AtG Gunnery, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Sara Benito	Lieutenant	Green	5	\$1		0 – Level Bomb -1 – Maneuverability, Evasion -2 – Initiative, Climb, Dive, AtG Gunnery, Dive Bomb, Torpedo, AtA Gunnery
Julio Rossini	Lieutenant	Green	5	\$1		-1 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery, Climb, Dive -2 – Evasion, AtG Gunnery, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Mario Drago	Lieutenant	Green	3	\$1		-1 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery -2 – Climb, Dive, Evasion, AtG Gunnery, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Luigi Balbo	Lieutenant	Green	3	\$1		-1 – Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo -2 – Initiative, Maneuver, Climb, Dive, Evasion, AtA Gunnery, AtG Gunnery

Cash on hand: \$26

Campaign 1: Scuffle in the Riviera

Mission 1: Fighter Sweep

This is mostly an opportunity to shake down some pilots and get them blooded. I'm going to send Vizzini and Montoya in C.R.42s and Rossini and Drago in C.R.32s. Rossini and Drago take off first at Medium altitude, while Vizzini and Montoya will follow one band behind them at High.

Rossini and Drago get an opportunity in Band 2 when they encounter a Skua flying in formation with a Potez 631 at Low altitude. Must be an enemy MAS in the neighborhood! Drago wins initiative, and takes advantage of his altitude to surprise the enemy. Drago attacks the Potez 631, getting a solid hit that causes one of its engines to start smoking. The Skua counters, easily setting Drago up for shot while he's focused on the Potez. Drago is barely able to get out of the cockpit before his plane goes into a death spiral. Rossini, following him, sees Drago's parachute deploy as he dives on the wounded Potez. Unfortunately, he's not able to capitalize on the situation and doesn't get a shot off. Even wounded, Rossini is not faster than the Potez, and the wounded plane Bugs Out!

Vizzini and Montoya arrive to find Rossini in a dogfight with a Skua, a smoking Potez 631 heading off into the distance, and no sign of Drago. Not good! Montoya promptly dives down to Medium as the Skua turn to engage Rossini. Rossini, a bit shaken, is unable to fend off the Skua. The Skua lines him up and guns him down! Rossini is able to bail out unharmed. Vizzini drops down to join Montoya.

Montoya, confident that his CO is backing him up, dives down to engage the Skua. The Skua pilot, however, is ready for him, and gets the advantage. The Skua fires, badly damaging Montoya's Falco. The Skua presses the engagement, but his shots go wide. Vizzini follows up and attacks, hoping to relieve his wingman. He falls in behind the Skua, and easily avoids the fire from the Skua's rear gunner. Vizzini fires and walks his shots into the Skua's engine. Two parachutes are soon to be seen. Vizzini orders Montoya home and continues on to the target area alone.

He arrives at the designated coordinates without further incident. After a few minutes of lazy figure eights, he spots a pair of MB-152s at Medium altitude.

The French fighters spot him, as well, and the leader dives in an attack. Vizzini is quite prepared, however, and is able to retain the advantage. Vizzini fires and just barely gets a hit, but does heavy damage anyway. He turns in on his opponent, hoping to finish him off before the wingman joins the fight. Obviously responding poorly to the controls, the MB-152 is helpless before Vizzini's agile Falco and Vizzini's following burst causes his target to explode.

The enemy wingman is now in a one-on-one situation as he dives down on Vizzini. Vizzini, coolly prepared and anticipating the coming attack, is easily able to maneuver to retain the advantage. A quick burst into the engine block, and Vizzini is able to go home victorious!

An expensive mission, however, as the \$15 Bid for the mission is offset by the loss of two C.R.32s and the repairs on a damaged C.R.42. A good mission personally for Vizzini, though, as he racks up three kills and gets 2 XP (one from the Skua he shot down and one from his share of the mission award). Montoya and Rossini each get 1 XP.

Squadriglia Vizzini Inventory				
<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Activation Cost</u>	<u>Bombload</u>	<u>Ceiling</u>	<u>Fuel</u>
C.R. 42 Falco	1	n/a	High	7
C.R. 42 Falco	1	n/a	High	7
S.M.79 Sparviero	3	Medium	Low	19
S.M.79 Sparviero	3	Medium	Low	19
B.R.20	2	Medium	Medium	30

Pilot	MAS Rank	Combat Rating	XP	Mission Salary	Unique Traits	Skills
Enrico Vizzini, CO, 3 Kills	Major	Experienced	11	\$3	Ldr 10	0 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery -1 – Climb, Dive -2 – AtG Gunnery, Evasion, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Diego Montoya, XO	Captain	Regular	8	\$2	Admin 18	0 – AtA Gunnery -1 – Maneuverability, Dive -2 – Initiative, Climb, Evasion, AtG Gunnery, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Sara Benito	Lieutenant	Green	5	\$1		0 – Level Bomb -1 – Maneuverability, Evasion -2 – Initiative, Climb, Dive, AtG Gunnery, Dive Bomb, Torpedo, AtA Gunnery
Julio Rossini	Lieutenant	Green	5/6	\$1		-1 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery, Climb, Dive -2 – Evasion, AtG Gunnery, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Mario Drago	Lieutenant	Green	3	\$1		-1 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery -2 – Climb, Dive, Evasion, AtG Gunnery, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Luigi Balbo	Lieutenant	Green	3	\$1		-1 – Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo -2 – Initiative, Maneuver, Climb, Dive, Evasion, AtA Gunnery, AtG Gunnery

Vizzini uses his XP to boost Climb and Dive to -1. Rossini doesn't spend his XP yet, while Montoya improves his Dive skill.

Squadron Bankroll: \$25

Mission 2: Sea Strike

Last mission we learned about the folly of putting inexperienced pilots flying antiquated aircraft into combat. I should have either kept everyone together or just left C.R.32s at home. Lesson learned (though hard to apply since those C.R.32s got shot down). This next mission is an attack against a French corvette. This is a chance for our bomber pilots to win some glory. I'll definitely be taking both Sparviers as they are excellent, fast torpedo bombers. Benito and Balbo will be flying them (and I just now realized that my two 'b'omber pilots have names that begin with 'b.' How weird of me.)

Since I have the necessary aircraft to complete the mission already, I don't need to go shopping. I'll send Rossini and Drago in the Falcos as escort. Two Sparviers plus four torpedoes plus a pair of Falcos will cost me \$12 to activate. I'm not going to make a lot of money on this mission if I'm successful, but at this early stage it's more about seasoning my pilots. I purposely left Vizzini and Montoya at home so I would only have to pay them \$1 at the end of mission for having sat around instead of their full pay for flying a mission, saving \$3.

All four aircraft will fly together in one Wing, with the Falcos at Medium altitude, and the Sparviers at their maximum of Low.

The Squadriglia pass through the first four bands without incident. When they reach Band 5, however, things begin to get a little interesting. Two light cruisers are spotted steaming in the vicinity with a Potez 631 flying overhead at Medium.

Benito, in overall command of the mission, is wondering whether they've been spotted, when one of the light cruisers opens up, settling the question for good. Fortunately, the shots are wide. The Potez then moves to engage Drago. The French pilot is not very good, and clumsily flies into Drago's way. Drago fires and gets a hit, causing light damage.

Benito and Balbo drop down to Very Low. Since they're both carrying two torpedoes, Benito orders Balbo to join her in a torpedo run on the second light cruiser. If they can bag a light cruiser on their way to sink a corvette, their

employers should be quite pleased! Amazingly, for relatively raw pilots, both fish run straight and true and slam into the hull of their target, which quickly rolls over and begins to sink!

Rossini moves to join the fight against the Potez 631. Distracted by Drago, the Potez is easy game. He makes a slashing attack that causes both of the target's engines to begin smoking and sputtering. Two 'chutes are seen shortly thereafter, freeing the Squadriglia to leave the other light cruiser behind. In Band 6, both Sparviers climb back up to Low prior to the attack on the corvette.

The target is reached without further incident, and the corvette is soon found steaming alone. This time Balbo leads the attack, and drops back down to Very Low as he sets up his run. Unfortunately, he times the torpedo drop badly and the fish skips across the water and actually flies *over* the target. Benito follows him in, hoping to finish the job, but she also times her launch badly. This time, the torpedo hits the water at too steep of an angle and passes underneath.

With the bombers out of torpedoes, Rossini knows it is now up to him and Drago to try and sink the corvette with gunfire. He signals Drago to join him as he dives down to Low. The French ship lets its displeasure at being made a target known by firing at Benito, but the ship's luck is no better than the bombers' as its fire goes wide.

Out of ordnance, Balbo and Benito head for home. Rossini continues his dive down to Very Low and strafes the corvette. However, he doesn't have any training in Air-to-Ground attacks, and his burst isn't even close. Drago has the same problem.

The area around the corvette is thick with machine gun fire as the Falcos and the corvette exchange harmless salvos. Rossini's second pass isn't any better than the first, and the ship's return fire goes just as wide. Drago starts his run just as awkwardly as Rossini's, but when he flinches away from a near miss he unintentionally walks his burst into the hull, rupturing it in enough places that it begins to sink!!! *(It was only due to Drago rolling a '1' and getting the automatic hit that Squadriglia Vizzini was able to complete this mission.)*

Sweaty and relieved, Rossini orders Drago to form up with him as they head for home.

The \$12 spent to active for the mission left \$13 in the bank. Pilot pay subtracts another \$6, but completing the mission puts \$20 back in leaving the Squadriglia at \$27 – a very modest profit overall, but all things considered not bad!

The 2 XP awarded for the mission are split between Benito and Drago; Benito for helping to sink the light cruiser and Drago for actually completing the mission. Rossini gets 1 XP for shooting down the Potez and Balbo gets 2 XP for the light cruiser.

With the campaign concluded, Vizzini gets the 1 XP bonus for being Top Gun. Balbo and Drago end up sharing the Mud Pie prize, with Drago getting the 1 XP for sinking a ship by himself.

Bank: \$27

Prestige: 43

Campaign Date: July, 1940

Squadriglia Vizzini Inventory				
<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Activation Cost</u>	<u>Bombload</u>	<u>Ceiling</u>	<u>Fuel</u>
C.R. 42 Falco	1	n/a	High	7
C.R. 42 Falco	1	n/a	High	7
S.M.79 Sparviero	3	Medium	Low	19
S.M.79 Sparviero	3	Medium	Low	19
B.R.20	2	Medium	Medium	30

Pilot	MAS Rank	Combat Rating	XP	Mission Salary	Unique Traits	Skills
Enrico Vizzini, CO, 3 Kills	Major	Experienced	12	\$3	Ldr 10	0 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery -1 – Climb, Dive, AtG Gunnery -2 – Evasion, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Diego Montoya, XO	Captain	Regular	8	\$2	Admin 18	0 – AtA Gunnery -1 – Maneuverability, Dive -2 – Initiative, Climb, Evasion, AtG Gunnery, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Sara Benito	Captain	Regular	6	\$2		0 – Level Bomb -1 – Maneuverability, Evasion, Torpedo -2 – Initiative, Climb, Dive, AtG Gunnery, Dive Bomb, AtA Gunnery
Julio Rossini, 1 Kill	Captain	Regular	7	\$2		-1 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery, Climb, Dive, AtG Gunnery, Evasion -2 – Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Mario Drago, 1 Ship	Lieutenant	Green	5	\$1		-1 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery, Dive, AtG Gunnery -2 – Climb, Evasion, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Luigi Balbo, 1 Ship	Lieutenant	Green	5	\$1		0 - Torpedo -1 – Level Bomb, Dive Bomb -2 – Initiative, Maneuver, Climb, Dive, Evasion, AtA Gunnery, AtG Gunnery

Campaign 2: MTO Land Campaign



Mission 1: Carpet Bombing

The second campaign in the sequence is *Et tu, Brutus?* which pits the English and the French against each other over the fate of the French fleet after the fall of France to Germany. As an Italian MAS, we could care less. So instead, we'll do one of the generic MTO Land Campaigns, which will coincide with the early Italian efforts in the desert. I first determine the host, and with a roll of a '3' determine that Italy is sponsoring this campaign. I then randomly determine that Italy is the Attacker for the campaign (I did an odds/evens roll with odds being the attacker).

Our first mission is Carpet Bombing, which requires us to drop six damage points worth of bombs in the Target Area. Since I have three bombers capable of dropping a medium bomb load each, that's potentially nine damage points, so I don't have to buy aircraft to complete the mission. A payout of \$50 means success could finally give Squadriglia Vizzini some momentum, too. On the other hand, I have a Light threat level, which means 2d6 Encounter Points, which could overwhelm my pair of C.R.42s. Activating the B.R. 20 and one of the Sparviers with a Medium bomb load each will cost \$9 plus an additional \$2 for the Falcos I have. Out of the \$27 I have in the bank, that would leave me with \$16 remaining. That might be enough to pick up another fighter. Let's see what I can get...

An Availability roll of 37 plus my Prestige of 43 gives me a total of 80 – access to Uncommon or lower. Not what I was hoping for. In terms of Italian aircraft, I can choose between the C.R.32 (\$8), Ba.27M Metallico (\$9), C.R.42 Falco (\$12), G.50 Freccia (\$17), and the Re.2000 (\$18). From Germany, I could get the He-51 (\$11), He-112B (\$13), Me-109C (\$11), Me-109E (\$12), and the Me-110C (\$11). The Freccia and the Re.2000 are out of my price range, which is too bad. The Metallico is actually not a bad idea at \$9 as while it's more fragile and altitude-limited than the Falco, it's more maneuverable and has a bit more gas. I'm sorely tempted by one of the German aircraft to get my hands on some 20mm cannons, but I decide that Vizzini is a proud son of Italy, and will only use Italian aircraft. After some thought, I decide to go ahead and get the Metallico over another Falco as I really intend this aircraft to be temporary. After paying for it and its Activation cost, that leaves me with \$6 in the bank. Hopefully, after this mission, I'll be able to afford some newer planes!

Vizzini and Montoya will fly the Falcos while Rossini flies the Metallico. They will fly at Medium so they can stay together. Benito will fly the B.R.20 and Balbo will fly a Sparviero. They will fly together at Low altitude. Both groups will stay together in one wing.

In Band 2, a significant Allied facility is encountered that is protected by a Heavy Flak Gun, a Standard Flak Gun, and 2 Light AAA. We don't want to linger in the face of all that firepower, so we're just going to plow through the Band as fast as we can and hope our losses are minimal. The Heavy Flak Gun targets Montoya (fortunately, the bombers are flying under the reach of the Flak guns). The Heavy Flak brackets Montoya and his poor Falco is quickly shredded. He is able to bail out without injury. The Standard Flak Gun then targets Vizzini and blasts him out of the sky, injuring him in the process. Not good!!! The Light AAA open up on the bombers, with Benito and Balbo each getting shot at. Fortunately, they both come through unscathed. That was expensive, as I've lost my two best pilots and their fighters with nothing to show for it.

Band 3 has more good news as the Squadriglia encounters an Allied Armor unit protected by a Moderate AAA site. The AAA fires at Balbo and gets a proximity hit, causing his Sparviero to vent half of the fuel in his tanks. Fortunately, he should still have enough to finish the mission. The Armor fires at Benito but does only negligible damage.

Band 5 brings our battered group into contact with a lone Spitfire Mk. I at High. Rossini knows he's going to have the fight of his life on hands going up against a Spit in a Ba.27M! Benito and Balbo both go into Evasive maneuvers. Rossini knows he has to stay between the Spitfire and the bombers, but the Metallico can't fly high enough to attack the Spitfire, so he'll have to wait for the Spitfire to bring the fight to him. He goes Evasive in the meantime. The Spitfire dives down, obviously trying to slash past Rossini on its way to the bombers. Rossini enjoys the nimbleness of the Metallico as he is able to outmaneuver the Spitfire and takes a split-second shot as it flashes by, scoring a hit! (*gotta love those '1s.'*) The fight is over before it began as the wounded Allied pilot barely makes it out of the shattered cockpit. Still shaking with adrenaline, Rossini leads the bombers on to the Target where they are able to drop their bombs without further incident. Mission accomplished!

After paying pilot salaries and repairing the bombers, I now have \$37 in the bank. Yay!!!!

I check the Pilot Fate Chart to see what happens to Vizzini and Montoya. Vizzini wanders back after missing the next mission, while Montoya has been killed! Ouch! Squadriglia Vizzini is definitely struggling to get ahead.

I've got 12 XP to distribute, which translates into four each for Vizzini, Rossini, Benito and Balbo. Rossini gets an additional XP for shooting down the Spitfire.



Bank: \$37

Prestige: 52

Campaign Date: July, 1940

Squadriglia Vizzini Inventory				
<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Activation Cost</u>	<u>Bombload</u>	<u>Ceiling</u>	<u>Fuel</u>
Ba.27M Metallico	1	n/a	Medium	8
S.M.79 Sparviero	3	Medium	Low	19
S.M.79 Sparviero	3	Medium	Low	19
B.R.20	2	Medium	Medium	30

Pilot	MAS Rank	Combat Rating	XP	Mission Salary	Unique Traits	Skills
Enrico Vizzini, CO, 3 Kills	Lt. Col.	Veteran	16	\$4	Ldr 10	0 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery, Climb, Dive -1 – AtG Gunnery -2 – Evasion, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Julio Rossini, XO, 2 Kills	Major	Experienced	12	\$3	Admin 17 (Italy)	0 – AtA Gunnery, Maneuverability -1 – Initiative, Climb, Dive, AtG Gunnery, Evasion, Dive Bomb -2 – Level Bomb, Torpedo
Sara Benito	Captain	Regular	10	\$2		0 – Level Bomb -1 – Maneuverability, Evasion, Torpedo -2 – Initiative, Climb, Dive, AtG Gunnery, Dive Bomb, AtA Gunnery
Luigi Balbo, 1 Ship	Captain	Regular	9	\$2		0 – Torpedo, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb -2 – Initiative, Maneuver, Climb, Dive, Evasion, AtA Gunnery, AtG Gunnery
Mario Drago, 1 Ship	Lieutenant	Green	5	\$1		-1 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery, Dive, AtG Gunnery -2 – Climb, Evasion, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo

Rossini gets promoted to XO in the wake of Montoya's death. After rolling for his new Unique Trait, we find out he has Axis Contacts in Italy. This will enable the squadron to maintain favorable access to Italian aircraft even when working for another sponsor.



Mission 2: Fighter Sweep

So now I'm tasked with a Fighter Sweep, and I'm all but out of fighters! I check for aircraft availability, and get a total of 82, Withheld or less. I've got just enough cash on hand to buy a pair of M.C.200 Sietta (base cost \$18, reduced by \$1 for being a year old, and reduced a further 10% rounded down for another -\$1 giving a final cost of \$16). Three more bucks to activate the two Siettas and the Metallico, and we take off for the mission with \$2 in the bank. Vizzini still isn't back yet, so it'll be Rossini and Drago in the Siettas and Benito in the Metallico – all at Medium altitude.

This mission starts in Band 1, so entering Band 2 the Squadriglia encounters an Allied Mechanized Infantry unit and a Light AAA battery. At Medium, we're safe from the Infantry, so we'll just have to brave one salvo from the AAA. It just barely misses.

The next two Bands pass uneventfully. Band 5, however, has three Spitfire Mk. Is and two Gladiator Mk. IIs. (Hmmm, I wonder if we're doing a sweep near Malta?) All five aircraft are at High altitude.

One of the Gladiators dives down, but does not engage. Drago pounces, getting his first kill. Benito and Rossini go Evasive, worried about those Spitfires. One of the Spits and the remaining Gladiator dive down, but don't immediately engage. They are followed shortly by the remaining pair of Spitfires, the first targeting Benito as he comes. In spite of the fact that she's a bomber pilot, she handles her Metallico well, just barely dodging the attack and getting a shot off as the Spit zooms by. There, however, her lack of skill with fighters tells, as her shot misses badly. The other Spitfire is hard on the heels of his element leader, but to no avail. Benito is all over the sky, but again her shot misses.

Drago comes to her aid, attacking the trailing Spitfire. He manages to get on the Spit's tail, but can't get the shot home. Benito continues the fight, also focusing on the trailer. She gets a shot off, but can't hit the broadside of a barn (that's her third '10' in a row!). Eager to even the odds, Rossini joins the skirmish. The Spitfire, however, is having none of that, and aggressively cuts Rossini off with a burst of fire. Rossini takes some hits, but only suffers cosmetic damage.

The lead Spitfire joins the fight, targeting Benito as an easy mark in her obsolete Metallico. He easily gets the advantage, but misses the shot. The remaining Gladiator, flying on the Spit's wing, follows him in. Obsolete her Metallico may be, it's still capable of a fight, as Benito dodges the swirl of aircraft around her, and gets the advantage over the Gladiator.

She shoots, and the Gladiator goes down in a spin. The other Spits pursue the fight with a vengeance. Benito's luck finally runs out as her engine explodes under a hail of gunfire. She bails out before the flames reach the cockpit.

The last Spitfire then moves to engage Rossini. The attack was anticipated, however, and Rossini deftly gets the advantage. His shots hit home, heavily damaging the Spitfire.

Feeling the pressure, Drago engages a Spitfire. Unfortunately, all he gets for his trouble is a ride on the silk. Rossini is now surrounded by three Spitfires. He engages the wounded trailer with a slashing attack. Already badly damaged, it only takes a short burst to down it. In an incredible display of flying prowess, Rossini outmaneuvers both Spitfires as they attack him, and both take heavy damage as a result of his fire.

He presses his advantage, attacking the leader. Lumbering due to damage, the wounded Spitfire is easy prey, and Rossini finishes him off as his guns go dry. The last Spitfire, also damaged, moves to disengage. With a salute, Rossini lets him go, then turns for home, himself. Without any ammo, he can't finish the mission.

Checking for survivors, we discover that Benito will wander back after missing the next mission, but that Drago has been captured. That bit of unfortunate news means that when Rossini gets home, the bounties for shooting down four aircraft means that his salary and the maintenance salary for Balbo are covered, leaving the Squadriglia Vizzini with \$2 in the bank, one fighter and three bombers and only two pilots on hand when Vizzini returns.

Benito earns 2 XP for her kill, and Rossini gets 4 XP for his two kills.

Bank: \$2 Prestige: 53 Campaign Date: July, 1940

Squadriglia Vizzini Inventory				
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Pilot	MAS Rank	Combat Rating	XP	Mission Salary	Unique Traits	Skills
Enrico Vizzini, CO, 3 Kills	Lt. Col.	Veteran	16	\$4	Ldr 10	0 – Initiative, Maneuverability, AtA Gunnery, Climb, Dive -1 – AtG Gunnery -2 – Evasion, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Julio Rossini, XO, 4 Kills	Lt. Col.	Veteran	16	\$4	Admin 17 (Italy)	0 – AtA Gunnery, Maneuverability, Initiative, AtG Gunnery -1 – Climb, Dive, Evasion, Dive Bomb -2 – Level Bomb, Torpedo
Sara Benito, 1 Kill	Major	Experienced	12	\$3		0 – Level Bomb -1 – Maneuverability, Evasion, Torpedo, Initiative, AtA Gunnery -2 – Climb, Dive, AtG Gunnery, Dive Bomb
Luigi Balbo, 1 Ship	Captain	Regular	9	\$2		0 – Torpedo, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb -2 – Initiative, Maneuver, Climb, Dive, Evasion, AtA Gunnery, AtG Gunnery

Mission 3: Ground Attack

We lost the bidding on this mission to Die Raubvogel. Probably just as well, since Benito is out of action this turn.

Mission 4: Recon

This is a pretty straight-forward mission. I have to get through the random encounters and be able to loiter for three turns over the target. Unfortunately, I have two rival bidders for this mission (because it is so potentially easy) that the incentive is strong to underbid, but I **need** the money. I take my chances and luck out on the die rolls, winning the bid for the mission.

I have to send the Saetta, as it is the only plane I've got that could fight it's way through any opposition. The bombers I have are old enough that even selling all three wouldn't give me enough for a fighter really worth having. I could launch a bomber to go along, which would have the endurance to get through some extended dogfights and still be able to complete the mission. However, if I lose the Saetta, the bomber is going to be a serious disadvantage on its own - best not to risk it. I decide to send Vizzini alone in the Saetta. It's still damaged from the last mission, as I don't have the money to fix it. However, it's just a -1 to future damage rolls, so I'll just have to get lucky.

Vizzini taps into his Ground Spotters trait to see what might be waiting for him in Band 1 before he takes off. They report the area is clear, so he takes off and climbs to Medium.

Band 1, being clear, passes uneventfully. Band 2 is also clear. Band 3, however, has a lone Spitfire Mk. I at High.

Vizzini spots the Spitfire first, but it is out of his reach. He goes evasive. The Spitfire dives down, but does not immediately engage.

With the Spitfire now in reach, Vizzini moves to engage. The Spit pilot seems to be a little raw, as he falls victim to a basic maneuver. Vizzini fires, and gets a solid hit. Plane smoking, the other pilot quickly hits the silk.

Vizzini flies on, and encounters no further opposition. He gets the pictures taken and heads back to base.

(This mission has a Weak Threat level, which means 1d6 Encounter Points. I lucked out and only rolled 1 EP – whew!)

Vizzini gets all eight Exp for himself, plus an additional point for shooting down the Spitfire. \$40, desperately needed, goes into the Squadriglia's coffers, which will cover his salary and the maintenance salaries for the rest of squadron. Then, he gets the Saetta repaired. Once that's done, Squadriglia Vizzini has \$33 in the bank.

Bank: \$33

Prestige: 62

Campaign Date: July, 1940

Squadriglia Vizzini Inventory				
<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Activation Cost</u>	<u>Bombload</u>	<u>Ceiling</u>	<u>Fuel</u>
M.C.200 Saetta	1	n/a	Medium	8
S.M.79 Sparviero	3	Medium	Low	19
S.M.79 Sparviero	3	Medium	Low	19
B.R.20	2	Medium	Medium	30

Pilot	MAS Rank	Combat Rating	XP	Mission Salary	Unique Traits	Skills
Enrico Vizzini, CO, 4 Kills	Colonel	Elite	25	\$5	Ldr 10	+1 – AtA Gunnery 0 – Initiative, Maneuverability, Climb, Dive -1 – AtG Gunnery -2 – Evasion, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb, Torpedo
Julio Rossini, XO, 4 Kills	Lt. Col.	Veteran	17	\$4	Admin 17 (Italy)	0 – AtA Gunnery, Maneuverability, Initiative, AtG Gunnery, Climb, Dive, Evasion -1 – Dive Bomb, Level Bomb -2 – Torpedo
Sara Benito, 1 Kill	Major	Experienced	12	\$3		0 – Level Bomb -1 – Maneuverability, Evasion, Torpedo, Initiative, AtA Gunnery -2 – Climb, Dive, AtG Gunnery, Dive Bomb
Luigi Balbo, 1 Ship	Captain	Regular	9	\$2		0 – Torpedo, Level Bomb, Dive Bomb -2 – Initiative, Maneuver, Climb, Dive, Evasion, AtA Gunnery, AtG Gunnery

Mission 5: Airfield Attack

Five damage points on a soft target is well within Squadriglia Vizzini's capabilities. Dealing with a Moderate threat level (3d6 Encounter Points) is not. Worst case scenario would be a full 18 Encounter Points. At best I could bring two fighters (I've got the cash to buy one more of whatever is available to me), but I could face as many as six aircraft in one band multiple times. Not likely, but given the luck I've had for this, it's entirely possible. Therefore, I opt not to bid on the last mission, and end this campaign early. With the campaign over, Rossini gets the Top Gun award for the campaign. The Carpet Bombing mission didn't produce an specific ground kills, so no one gets the Mud Pie.

That said, I'm in decent shape for the next campaign. I've lost two pilots and a lot of aircraft, but the remaining pilots have definitely improved in capability. I do believe we're off to the Balkans for the Aegean Debacle. Wish me luck!

Stay Tuned!

MAS-WWII: MTO is the first in a planned series that will bring the fun and strategy of Mercenary Air Squadron to World War II. Ownership of MAS is required to fully utilize MAS-WWII: MTO. Aircraft used by the Commonwealth, France, Germany and Italy are included for a total of 78 aircraft. New rules and modifications to existing MAS rules capture the intense action of a World War II-era dogfight across five campaigns, two of which are designed to be replayable over and over for the same squadron.

Next in the pipeline for the MAS-WWII series is PTO, which brings us to the scorching heat of the Pacific, adding Japanese and American aircraft.