

Allied Fleet Decimated in Two Day Sea Battle

by Tom Tanner, AP (Axis Press)

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In the heaviest action since the Rhode Island campaign, Axis naval forces routed an Allied incursion into the New York Operations Area August 23-24, sinking every Allied ship but one in a two day running gun fight.

Sources tell us that the Imperial German Navy 1st Scouting Group composed of SMS HINDENBURG (flagship – Vice Adm. Tom Tanner) and SMS DERFFLINGER (Capt. Ken Kelly) encountered a small Allied task force in the neutral Pennsylvania region of Lake Redman and learned of the Allied intentions to move into the New York OpArea to escort the recently completed USS NEW JERSEY during her shakedown cruise. The High Seas Fleet mobilized a force of two battlecruisers, three battleships and a heavy cruiser for the operation. As required by the Tripartite Pact, Japan sent the IJN MUSASHI (Adm. Carl Camurati-san) specifically to test the metal of the new American super-dreadnought.

Near Pawling, New York the Axis Fleet intercepted the Allied task force composed of three battleships, one dreadnought and a light cruiser. In the first of a series of sharp actions that would last throughout the night and into the next day, the HMS NEWCASTLE (Cdr. Scott Hornbeck) was an early casualty after being taken under fire by DERFFLINGER and was left sinking and adrift. Elements of the 1st and 3rd Battle Squadrons composed of SMS NASSAU (Capt. Cameron Moury), SMS POSEN (Capt. Bill Garthaffner) and SMS Baden (Capt. Matt Moury) inflicted serious damage to the USS North Carolina (Capt. Dave Vogtman) and USS NEW JERSEY (Capt. John Boyer) while directly contributing to the sinking of the USS ARIZONA (flagship – Adm. Don Fisher). In the afternoon reinforcements arrived in the form of the USS SOUTH CAROLINA (Capt. Chris Gamaliy) and two vessels that looked remarkably like NASSAU class dreadnoughts. But the Allied fleet continued to suffer heavy losses. At the end of the engagement SOUTH CAROLINA would be the sole Allied-built ship not to be sunk.

As the engagement lasted into the night, a furious firefight erupted around the NEW JERSEY which apparently failed to detect the approach of the BADEN, NASSAU, POSEN, ADMIRAL SCHEER (Cdr. Barry Tighe), DERFFLINGER, and MUSASHI. The Axis ships, renowned for their night fighting prowess, surrounded the NEW JERSEY close to shore, inflicting serious damage. Drifting off into the night to await her five minutes, she was intercepted by the darkened HINDENBURG and engaged at extremely close range before her time ran out and she was brought to shore, both main bilge pumps struggling to prevent the massive ship from sinking. Meanwhile, the NORTH CAROLINA, suffering a main propulsion lubrication problem, dodged the Axis Fleet, judiciously using her spotlight to avoid giving the Axis a datum to shoot at. In the middle of this action the Spanish dreadnought ESPANA (Cdr. Kevin Plumer) was sunk, the unearthly glow of her lights beaming from the bottom of the pond.

In the confusion of the night battle, the BADEN was captured by the Allies and taken into service as USS BAIDIN during the engagements Sunday morning. In the morning the NORTH CAROLINA was finally put under along with the BAIDIN, leaving the Allies only the SOUTH CAROLINA and NEW JERSEY afloat for action in the afternoon. Running short on fuel and ammunition or needing to return to base for repairs, the smaller ships were not present for a two sortie engagement between the NEW JERSEY and MUSASHI. Superior training and material showed as the newly commissioned NEW JERSEY suffered badly at the hands of the hard-hitting MUSASHI. NEW JERSEY was already down by the bows when Axis light forces composed of the SMS SCHARNHORST (Capt. Ken Kelly) and the feared IJN OKINOSHIMA (Capt. Tom Tanner-san), supported by POSEN and ADM SCHEER, returned to the OpArea for the next two sorties. The SOUTH CAROLINA and the salvaged ESPANA attempted to defend the ravished NEW JERSEY, but despite two pumps furiously spitting forth water she soon found herself slipping beneath the waves.

With the Allied ships dispatched, the Axis crews began to celebrate and issuance of medicinal brandy and saki was authorized. Unfortunately a little too much alcohol was imbibed and words were exchanged between the crews of the smaller ships and the crew of the MUSASHI, resulting in an unfortunate incident – the SCHARNHORST, POSEN and OKINOSHIMA began to attack the MUSASHI! Hounded on all sides, suffering from three straight sorties, short on fuel and far from home, the MUSASHI fought valiantly but eventually rolled over and sank with all hands.