

Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising Sonja Guide

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Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising
By: Tronn Bonne
Guide - CO Sonja
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Version 1.4

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1. Version History
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Version 1.0 [7/13/05] Guide Completed

Version 1.1 [7/15/05] Made Some Minor Corrections

Version 1.2 [8/31/05] Expanded Sonja VS Other COs Section

Version 1.3 [11/7/05] Made Various Additions and Corrections

Version 1.4 [8/30/06] AWRev authorized to use this Guide

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2. Copyright and Disclaimer
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3. Purpose of this Guide

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This guide is not designed for beginners to Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising and is not designed to be a walkthrough for the Yellow Comet Missions which use Sonja. If you are unfamiliar with the basics of the game then I suggest you read the opening section of one of the walkthrough guides for Advance Wars 2 posted on GameFAQs or Neoseeker.

On a more personal note many people might be wondering why I am writing a guide for an Advance Wars 2 CO when Advance Wars DS is just around the corner. The answer is that I am a late comer to the Advance Wars community. By the Summer of 2005 I had never played the first game and I had owned the second game for only three months. However, it was not until after I finished the campaigns and spent time experimenting with all the COs in Versus Mode and the War Room that I checked out GameFAQs to see what sort of guides they had. I was surprised to discover that no Guide was dedicated to Sonja, a CO who really deserves one because her abilities can be so difficult to use effectively. Although I was a bit discouraged by the fact that AWDS was on the horizon I decided to go ahead and compose the guide for Yellow Comet CO Sonja. I see this document as my way of honoring one of the greatest strategy games of all time and, more importantly, a CO whose emphasis on thinking rather than power truly embodies this game at its best.

Finally, feel free to e-mail me at the address in the Copyright and Disclaimer section if you notice any mistake or have any comments with this guide. Please contact me if you wish to use any of the information in this guide or its format for a guide/FAQ of your own. Also feel free to e-mail me if you wish to submit a strategy that works well with Sonja or if you would like to share your opinion of her. I reserve the right to select what material I will and will not include in this guide. I will give full credit to the authors of any outside material that I do decide to include.

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4. Introduction to Sonja

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Who is Sonja? She is the daughter of Kanbei, the Emperor of Yellow Comet, and is a master strategist who excels at intelligence gathering. Sonja is the brains to Kanbei's muscle and Sensei's air force. When Black Hole invaded, Sonja was the one responsible for composing the strategies that enabled the Yellow Comet army to successfully defend their country. The following is the in-game description of Sonja. I have included information in the brackets that is not apparent in the normal description.

Name: Sonja

Country: Yellow Comet

Kanbei's daughter. Cool and collected, she likes to plan before making a move.

Hit: Computers

Miss: Bugs

Skill: All units have an extended vision range [by one space] in Fog of War. Hides HP intel from foes. Counterattacks are slightly stronger. [There is also a chance that the firepower of her units may drop when she attacks.]

CO Power Meter: 00000

CO Power: Enhanced Vision

-Increases the vision range of all units by 1 space and allows them to see into woods and reefs. [They can not see submerged Subs]

CO Super Power: Counter Break

-Increases the vision range of all units by 1 space and allows them to see into woods and reefs. Counterattacks are stronger. [They can not see submerged Subs]

Victory Quote: That settles that! It takes brains to win!

How to Unlock: You can purchase Sonja from Hachi after you complete the Yellow Comet campaign.

Sonja is one of the hardest (perhaps even the hardest) CO to use effectively. She is often regarded as both a weak and a bland CO. The perception that she is weak stems from her random decrease in attack power and, in particular, the lack of "devastating" CO powers. She is perceived as bland because she has no specialty troops. Finally, many players believe her to be completely useless in games without FOW because her CO powers rest so heavily on its presence.

I do believe that Sonja is an extremely difficult CO to use. However, that does not mean that she is bland or weak, even when FOW is off. In fact, Sonja is my favorite CO with Jess in second place and Olaf in third. Overall Sonja is a well balanced CO who is more than capable of implementing any strategy and winning. I hope this Guide will help players to gain a new perspective on Sonja's unique skills and how to use them to win battles.

Below are the five main reasons why I think Sonja is an outstanding CO.

1. No way around it, Sonja is a hard CO to use and any player who wants a challenge can find it when playing Sonja. Every victory with Sonja is achieved through outwitting rather than overpowering your foe.
2. Sonja's abilities are wholly unique. No other CO has increased FOW vision, stronger counterattacks in absence of increased attack strength, and hide their units HP from human players.
3. Sonja is a balanced CO, unit wise, which means she can easily change her strategy to meet the requirements of the level and of her opponents. Also, as you will see later on she can be just as effective outside of FOW despite the fact that some of her skills and her CO powers cause her to be "specialized" for fighting in FOW.
4. Sonja is a good CO to have as a partner for team games that take place in FOW. Your ally will be able to benefit from your increased sight range and, therefore, be able to use your intel to better implement their strategy.

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5. Statistics
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All of Sonja's units are, at first glance, normal strength. This means that they all have 100/100 firepower. The first 100 indicates attack strength while the second 100 indicates defense strength. Defense strength reduces the damage a unit takes and can, of course, be increased by terrain values and by using either of the CO powers which increase defense strength by 10%. It is important with Sonja to emphasize that defense strength does not directly equal

counterattack strength. Your counterattack strength is a separate value but having a higher defense means more units are able to counterattack and, therefore, do more damage.

Roughly 1 out of every 5 times one of Sonja's units attack there is a drop in its attack value. This is more noticeable with units that have very high attack values (Neotanks, Rockets, Battleships, and Bombers). However, the drop in attack value does not seem to occur when you use CO powers.

It is difficult to accurately calculate what value Sonja's approximate drop in attack strength will be. In practice I have discovered that her attack strength sometimes drops to roughly 90% of what it usually would be. Her counterattack strength seems to always be 150% of what it normally would be.

Counter Break does not directly increase the counterattack strength of Sonja's units. Instead, it has the important effect of allowing her units to strike first when attacked. The battle animation does not show this but you will see the difference in the amount of damage that you and your opponent sustains.

Whenever a CO uses their CO Power they will, assuming they have it, use about one more star in addition to the COP's cost. That means that if Sonja uses her COP when she has her COP Meter fully charged at five stars she will actually use four stars instead of three stars. This will leave her with only one star still charged.

Below is the vision range and attack strength of Sonja's units.

Normal

Infantry 100/100 vision 3 (6 when on a mountain)
Mech 100/100 vision 3 (6 when on a mountain)
Recon 100/100 vision 6
Tank 100/100 vision 4
MD Tank 100/100 vision 2
Neo Tank 100/100 vision 2
APC 0/100 vision 2
Artlry 100/100 vision 2
Rockets 100/100 vision 2
A-Air 100/100 vision 3
Missiles 100/100 vision 6

Fighter 100/100 vision 3
Bomber 100/100 vision 3
B Cptr 100/100 vision 4
T Cptr 0/100 vision 3

B Ship 100/100 vision 3
Cruiser 100/100 vision 4
Lander 0/100 vision 2
Sub 100/100 vision 6

Enhanced Vision

Infantry 100/110 vision 4 (7 when on a mountain)
Mech 100/110 vision 4 (7 when on a mountain)
Recon 100/110 vision 7
Tank 100/110 vision 5
MD Tank 100/110 vision 3
Neo Tank 100/110 vision 3
APC 0/110 vision 3

Artlry 100/110 vision 3
Rockets 100/110 vision 3
A-Air 100/110 vision 3
Missiles 100/110 vision 7

Fighter 100/110 vision 4
Bomber 100/110 vision 4
B Cptr 100/110 vision 5
T Cptr 0/110 vision 4

B Ship 100/110 vision 4
Cruiser 100/110 vision 5
Lander 0/110 vision 3
Sub 100/110 vision 7

Counter Break

Infantry 100/110 vision 4 (7 when on a mountain)
Mech 100/110 vision 4 (7 when on a mountain)
Recon 100/110 vision 7
Tank 100/110 vision 5
MD Tank 100/110 vision 3
Neo Tank 100/110 vision 3
APC 0/110 vision 3
Artlry 100/110 vision 3
Rockets 100/110 vision 3
A-Air 100/110 vision 3
Missiles 100/110 vision 7

Fighter 100/110 vision 4
Bomber 100/110 vision 4
B Cptr 100/110 vision 5
T Cptr 0/110 vision 4

B Ship 100/110 vision 4
Cruiser 100/110 vision 5
Lander 0/110 vision 3
Sub 100/110 vision 7

6. Sonja's Abilities In-Depth

Just like the majority of COs, Sonja has several built in abilities which are augmented by her CO powers. Unlike most COs, Sonja is able to overcome the disadvantages of FOW and is the best CO to use for playing mind games with human opponents. What she lacks in power she makes up with her ability to bend the rules and confuse her enemies.

Hidden HP

The first, and most important, of Sonja's abilities that should be addressed is the hidden HP ability. This distinct ability is useless against CP opponents but it is a game winner against human players. The only way you are going to really be able to overcome some of the better COs in the game that are being controlled by a human player is if you can force them to waste precious firepower on injured units. Thus, you should not value your soldiers lives too much (Perhaps Lash was right about Sonja...). The best way to accomplish this is to have multiple units of same kind near one another. During your turn you can switch the places of your units (perhaps even combining some injured

ones while leaving others wounded) and can often cause your human foe to lose track of the targets they had just damaged. All that extra firepower Sturm can muster is useless if he sent his MD Tank to destroy your 1 HP instead of your 7 HP MD Tank. Because of this ability you will want to slightly outnumber your human opponent to make good use of survivors as decoys. Also, try to fight in forests, plains, and cities to decrease the chances of your full strength units from being wiped out in one shot. Alternatively, you can also use this skill to have your opponent attack full strength units when they think they are attacking an injured one. This can be very effective if your opponent sends an injured unit to finish off one of your units that turns out to have full HP and destroys their injured unit in the counterattack.

Increased Vision

When FOW is on, Sonja is at her best. Although the 1 increased sight range is small it can make a big difference. The most obvious difference is that you will be able to see and, therefore, attack an enemy unit that another CO would not have seen. This gives Sonja a slightly greater chance for first strike and presents her with a larger choice of targets. The increased sight range of 1 is also helpful if your Recons get wiped out. While another CO might find his forward units in the dark, Sonja's army will still be able to manage an effective offense and defense until another Recon is sent to the front lines. After all, in FOW one of Sonja's Tanks sees almost as far as another CO's Recon.

Counterattack Bonus

I will say up front that you should almost never sacrifice first strike in exchange for not attacking and hoping that you can do more damage when your opponent attacks you. Furthermore, don't lull yourself into thinking that because Sonja has a counterattack bonus and sometimes incurs an attack penalty you should always be defensive with her. This will only cost you the game. The best way to utilize the counterattack bonus is to behave like a Lash player and be obsessive compulsive about the defense bonus terrain offers. Remember, the more soldiers that survive the greater damage you inflict with a counterattack and the strength of your counterattacks can be very impressive at times. Thus, try to draw players into forest or plain combat and always try to sit forward units onto terrain with the highest defense bonus. It is sometimes worth attacking a slightly weaker and less dangerous target if it means you can place a unit in a forest or in a city when you attack. If used correctly you will see the enemy army gradually get worn down in Direct Combat by Sonja's impressive counterattack bonus.

Drop in Attack Power

There is really no way to fully deal with the occasional drop in attack power. Roughly 1/5 of the time you will incur a noticeable drop in attack strength and you will not realize it until after you have attacked. One way to manage it is to have your units close enough to each other so that if one does fail to finish off a particularly important target you have a reserve that can complete the job. Overall, it is more of a nuisance than a devastating penalty and it is really not too bad of a trade for the counterattack bonus (not to mention all of her other abilities.)

Size of COP Meter

With her COP Meter being a total of five stars, Sonja's COP Meter is tied with Adder and Hachi for being the shortest in the game. This means that Sonja can use her SCOP more often than any other CO besides Adder and Hachi. Sure, Counter Break is not as good as Samurai Spirit but it does cost a total of two

stars less.

Counter Break

At first glance the counterattack bonus from Counter Break is extremely difficult to utilize. You can't force your opponent to attack you but you certainly can put him or her in a very uncomfortable position with Counter Break. Attacking you might be very costly but leaving you alone for the day might be more costly. Most players will, however, opt to not attack and wait a day. Therefore, it is best to view Counter Break as a deterrent rather than something designed to devastate the attacking foe. It is best used when you don't want your opponent to attack you. As I stated earlier, I will discuss a good way to use Counter Break later on in the General Strategies section.

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7. Factors to Strategy

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What abilities, and to a certain extent strategy, Sonja can use depends on two key factors. The first is whether or not the FOW is on or off. The second is whether or not you are facing a CP or human opponent. These conditions affect Sonja more than they do other players because of the nature of her skills.

FOW on

You can fully utilize the tactics I mentioned above for your normal increase vision in FOW vision to maintain a strategic advantage over your opponents. However, remember that it is Sonja's CO powers that really enable her to dominate a FOW battle. She is the only CO in the game that can see and immediately attack units hiding in forests and reefs. Thus, Sonja's CO powers enable her to easily overcome ambushes. Because Enhanced Vision gives the same sight bonuses as Counter Break I suggest using Enhanced Vision more during FOW. Counter Break is critical for certain strategies which I will discuss later in the General Strategies section. However, you will always want to be able to counter your opponents efforts to conceal their forces in woods and, since Sonja's COP Meter is not that large, you can typically use Enhanced Vision almost back to back when you need to. Don't neglect Recons because your other units see farther than normal. The sight range of 6 for the recon vehicle is essential to giving you a better overview of the progress of the battle. Be sure to utilize forests well for both hiding Indirect and Direct Fire units. Getting your opponent caught in a game of hide and seek in the trees works to your advantage because of your CO powers. It is also easier to confuse your human opponent with your hidden HP because they will most likely not know what units you have in reserve. Players often assume any new unit they see heading toward them is at full strength or close to it. Subs are a good naval units for Sonja to use because they are superb scouts who can easily track down and sink enemy Battle Ships. Battle Copters are excellent for her air force due to their cost, good firepower, and good vision range. Be very aware of the range and location of enemy Indirects. They are the bane of your existence because they ignore your counterattack bonus. If you think some trees or a reef might be hiding an Indirect then go ahead and use Enhanced Vision. Better safe than sorry.

FOW off

Ok, Sonja is not useless when FOW is off. In fact, she really has not lost any ground at all when it comes to her strengths and weaknesses. Sonja's advantage in FOW boils down to her ability to overcome it and gather better intel. Thus, no FOW means Sonja loses a situational advantage but you are not really handicapped in her strategy. Your biggest loss is some of the usefulness of

her CO Powers but Counter Break is still effective for the counterattack bonus. You must capitalize on your hidden HP power against human opponents and your increased counterattack ability. Be sure to keep many units of the same kind near one another when fighting a human player to ensure that you can confuse them by switching their positions. Continue to fight in plains and forests whenever possible. Effective and frequent use of Counter Break is the key to victory when FOW is off. Again, always check the range of enemy Indirects. It is true that, due to the decreased effectiveness of her CO Powers, there are generally better COs besides Sonja to use for a mission when FOW is off. Still, as long as you make full use of her other abilities you will find that Sonja is just as effective and enjoyable to use outside of FOW as she is to use in it. I personally enjoy using Sonja in missions without FOW for the extra challenge and the increased feeling of satisfaction when I emerge victorious.

Human Opponent

When fighting a human opponent you must fully utilize the hidden HP skill. Everything I said about this skill in the Sonja's Abilities In-Depth section should be applied. That means making sure you have multiple units of the same type and keeping them relatively close to one another. This will most likely take the form of Tanks because their decent armor enables good counterattacks but their 7,000 cost makes them affordable. Don't repair or join units if they can be better used as decoys.

CP Opponent

The loss of the hidden HP ability considerably alters Sonja's strategy. If the FOW is off it means the only ace up her sleeve is her counterattack bonus and, in particular, her SCOP. However, all is not loss for Sonja. While a quantity strategy is better used against a human foe, the opposite is true for a CP opponent. You should produce MD Tanks as often as possible when fighting the computer. Md Tanks have a high defense factor and good firepower which means that they are superb when both attacking and counterattacking. They are also relatively affordable which is why I recommend MD Tanks over Neo Tanks. Of course, you have to be even more careful of enemy Indirects if you take this approach. CP opponents also respond in a very predictable fashion when you use Counter Break. The computer will typically move his or her units next to yours but not attack unless you have units with innate low defense such as infantry, the computer has very powerful units such as Neo Tanks, or the computer has units, such as Bombers or Indirects, that do not need to fear a counterattack.

8. General Strategies

Every CO has their distinct personality and their abilities match it. Playing "in character" with any CO is a good approach to the game. With Sonja, be cautious and calculating in your approach to fighting. Do not be reckless with her and keep your sights set on the big picture: victory. Minor losses here and there are acceptable if they are not strategically important.

Army Composition

Being a balanced CO with no specialty troops, Sonja is fully capable of using any unit in the game to achieve victory. You can creep along slowly and rely on Indirects, focus on building a peerless air force, dominate the seas with Cruisers, Subs, and Battle Ships, or conduct a blitzkrieg campaign on land with Tanks. There is no set army composition for Sonja and it is generally best to take a balanced approach when constructing your army. However, some very

specific strategies will require you to produce more of one unit type than you normally would. Furthermore, you will generally want to have the majority of Sonja's units be Direct Combat units because they benefit from both the day-to-day counterattack bonus and the bonus from Counter Break. Also, Sonja's Indirect unit of choice should be the Mobile Artillery because it is far easier to deploy in forests for FOW use than Rockets. Yet the choice is ultimately yours so feel free to experiment with Sonja's army composition.

Forest Combat

As I stated earlier, you should always take advantage of forest combat regardless of whether or not FOW is on or off. With FOW on you can set up a lot of Indirects in the forest, hide Tanks with the intention of ambushing or a combination of the two. Furthermore, your CO powers will allow you to easily destroy enemy units that were taking cover in the trees in FOW. Without FOW your units will still deliver more damage with their counterattacks due to the defense bonus of forests. Making full use of forests (or any terrain) is necessary to achieve victory with Sonja.

Backup Units

This is another general strategy that I have stated earlier but I will reemphasize it here. When fighting a human opponent keep several units of the same kind near one another so you can swap positions with them and increase the likelihood of confusing your foe. Furthermore, it is a good idea to attack the most threatening enemy unit first just in case you do suffer a drop in attack strength. That way you can use a nearby unit to finish off the injured enemy unit. Just be careful that your enemy does not use a missile silo or uses Sturm's SCOP, both of which can devastate your forces if they are too close together.

Mind Games

So how do you force your opponent to waste their fire power? Besides the mixing and matching of injured units to cause your foe to lose track of them here are two tips that can help you make the most of hidden HP against a human foe. As I stated earlier, your opponent will always assume that new unit they see coming toward them is at full strength. Having units your opponent has not injured recently, and therefore forgotten about, or has not fought before, if it is a multiplayer game, take the center of your line is a good way to cause your foes to waste their firepower. Another good way to play mind games is to leave injured units in areas with low terrain values. If your opponent has a choice between what he thinks are two full HP Tanks that are equal distance from him he will almost certainly strike the one on the road rather than the one on the city.

Countering Meatwalls

Since Sonja does lack a strong attack power bonus, meatwalls (Infantry and Mechs being used to shield other units) can be a problem. Your best counter is to use A-Airs and Infantry. Furthermore, activating Counter Break can also delay an enemy counterattack if she does fail to break through the enemy line. Utilizing a lot of Indirects is another option when confronted by a meatwall.

Breaking Chokepoints

Like meatwalls, chokepoints (holding a piece of narrow terrain, like a bridge or mountain pass, that can not be easily flanked) can also be a big problem for Sonja because of her lack of increased attack power. The best way, for most COs, to break a chokepoint is to use air units to flank the enemy's defense

line. If air units are not an option than it might be necessary to fall back and try to meet the enemy on open ground. However, the ideal option is to prevent the enemy from holding a chokepoint to begin with. Pay attention to the map and if you see a strategic chokepoint, try to occupy it before your enemy can.

FOW Recon Strategy

This commonly known strategy should be used to take full advantage of Sonja's superior scouting abilities. What you do is build a Recon early in the game (one per enemy) and send them to the perimeter of your foe's base. Once there, hide it in some trees that are a little off the beaten track but within sight range of your enemies production facilities and/or supply routes. Be sure to not let your enemy see your Recon as it moves into the forest. Keep your Recon stationary and use their intel to get continuous updates on what type of units your foe is producing and deploying to the frontline.

Advantages:

-Provides vital intel about enemy army composition that can make a huge difference during a FOW mission.

Counters:

-This strategy can be very difficult to counter unless you take the time to check every forest around your base for any hiding Recons. Otherwise, most Cos will just have to ignore it. If you are Olaf, Hawke, or Drake then your CO Powers can inform you of a Recon's presence. If you are Sonja then your CO Powers will instantly reveal any hiding Recons (which is why a counter recon strategy does not work well against her).

Leap Frog

This strategy is one that I designed for Sonja's SCOP and does a good job of using it to its fullest potential. This is also a strategy that you can implement in almost any circumstance (CP or Human opponent, FOW on or off) with almost any composition of direct combat troops (Although Tanks supported by an air force works best). The idea is that you condense your forces in an region within movement distance of some enemy or neutral cities. You also must either have your SCOP ready or almost ready. Activate your SCOP the second you can. Be sure to also have some Infantry and/or Mechs in transports. When ready, launch a massive attack and move all your forces into the contested region. Unload the foot solders on or near cities while resting as many of your Tanks and other direct combat units in forests, plains, or cities. Also, try to attack as many enemy units (especially Indirects and Bombers) as possible but don't let a unit end the day on a road unless if it was necessary (such as to destroy an Indirect). Remember, the overall goal of this strategy is not to wipe out the enemy but to gain control of good terrain. With your SCOP activated, your troops holding good terrain, cities under threat of being captured by your units in a few days, and your foes Indirects and Bombers destroyed or damaged, your enemy has really only three choices, all of which are beneficial to you. The first is to go ahead and attack your forces. Your foot soldiers will typically be the primary targets. However, by doing this your opponent has let a portion of his forces remain within striking distance of the rest of your units. The second option is to withdraw his forces with the intent to attack you the following day after your SCOP ends. This means that you can consolidate your position, begin capturing cities, and move your Indirects forward. Thus, in one day you can completely remove your opponent's army from a region that he thought was firmly under his control. The third is a combination of the two and basically takes the form of your foe sacrificing some units to attack your infantry and reduce their capturing rate. This strategy demonstrates how Sonja's SCOP can be used

"offensively" in gaining and holding new territory rather than defending ones already under your control.

Advantages:

- Gain a lot of ground in one day.
- Completely disrupt your foe's front line.
- Gain more cities.
- Can force your foe to retreat from the region.
- Can be initially devastating to your enemy's Indirects and reserves if your foe does not expect you to move your units so far forward in one day.

Counters:

- There are two ways you can initially prevent a Leap Frog attack. The first is to be highly aggressive and prevent Sonja from organizing her troops. The second is to you have an effective chokepoint that prevents Sonja's units from achieving their target destinations. However, a Sonja player would be foolish to try to implement this strategy in a narrow playing field without taking measures to ensure her units will break through (ie using Bombers and Indirects to shatter your blocking troops).
- The other way you can try to prevent a Leap Frog attack is to deliberately pull back units to occupy the cities, plains, and forests. This will mostly likely cause your front line to collapse but you won't lose as much ground as you would have if Sonja had successfully implemented this strategy. Of course, you have to know that Sonja is preparing to perform this sort of attack. If you see her massing direct fire units and transports combined with her SCOP Meter full or almost full then she may very well be preparing to launch a Leap Frog.
- The best way to deal with a successful Leap Frog, assuming she did a good job of taking out your Indirects and Bombers, is to sacrifice some Tanks to attack and reduce her foot soldiers capture ability, which buys you some time, and pull the rest of your army back with intention of attacking in a few days.

Other Strategies

Being a balanced commander, Sonja can perform almost any strategy that is not dependent on another CO's COP. Feints, Blitzkrieg's, Ambushes, Pierces, and Flanking maneuvers (to name a few) are all within Sonja's power to successfully implement. You should experiment with Sonja and if you have any other strategies you think work particularly well with her then please let me know.

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9. Countering Sonja
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Sonja is very difficult CO to counter because her units have no weakness that you can easily exploit (You never know when the drop in attack power will occur) and there is no way to fully overcome the hidden HP ability. If you don't already do so I would suggest you set the visuals to at least C, preferably B, when you fight against Sonja so you have a better idea of how much damage you (and other players) do to her units. If your not sure how much health a unit has then send a weaker unit rather than the Neo Tank to find out. Use Indirects and Bombers to bypass her counter attack bonus and her SCOP. Don't rely on forests too much in FOW or else that 18,000 you spent on Indirects will be turned to scrap metal before your eyes. If you are intent on utilizing the forests in FOW then be sure to guard your Indirects. However, it is probably best to try and keep your battles on and around roads as much as possible. Besides these few things, you can really only focus on your strengths and use your skills wisely. Even simply overpowering her with your CO Powers might not work if Sonja makes effective use of decoys.

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10. Sonja vs Other COs

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Sonja is fully capable of adjusting her strategy to match the strength and weaknesses of her opponents. Below I have listed the other CO's in the game and what you should be aware of while fighting them with Sonja.

Andy

Being the jack-of-all trades there is no real special strategy needed when facing Andy. The only thing you should pay attention to is your ability to wipe out his units. Always try to have some reserve units that can finish off targets that you don't want getting healed by his COP. Other than that, just use basic counters combined with Sonja's other abilities.

Max

When facing Max you might want to save up for a MD Tank and use it to block a chokepoint. Once you have accomplished that you can then focus on Indirects and blast away his direct combat units. Decoys also work well but be sure to keep your units in terrain because Max's attack strength is high enough that he can destroy many of your units in one shot if they are exposed. Also, in FOW don't be overly surprised if Max hides some artillery in forests to try to catch you off your guard. Be very conscious of how far properties are from nearby trees and weather or not Max's Artillery could hit them.

Sami

While Sami has superb Infantry and Mechs, her true strength is her ability to capture properties quickly. Her Transports move farther, and therefore allow her to gain more ground, and her high capture rate makes it very difficult to stop her soldiers from capturing a property once they started. Therefore, you must try to keep Sami from capturing too many properties early on. The best way to do this is to place Recons on properties toward the middle of the map (or somewhere half-way between you and Sami). This can often buy you some time because Sami will have to counter your Recons with either some of her own or transport Mechs to the cities you garrisoned. For the later stages of the game always keep your forward properties, bases, and HQ occupied when Sami's SCOP is nearly charged. Victory March when used correctly can cost you the game in one day.

Nell

Nell is a dangerous opponent and there is nothing you can really do to counter her luck skills. Be aware that her CO Powers can enable her cheaper units (such as infantry) to deliver considerable damage to your more expensive units (such as MD Tanks). Thus, quality is often not the best strategy against her. Try to always have reserve units incase she gets a lucky turn and wipes out most of your forward units.

Hachi

He's a CO with no weaknesses, inexpensive units, and has a COP Meter that is the same length as Sonja's. If you are not careful, he can overwhelm you with superior units. More importantly, his SCOP enables him to quickly reinforce his front lines by building units in cities. Use decoys well, occupy forward cities to help counter his SCOP, and counter him the best that you can.

Olaf

Olaf is a very tricky opponent because of the snow factor. Since it is generally better for Sonja to fight in plains and forests, a well timed Blizzard can leave your army frozen. Furthermore, his SCOP can also inform him of any ambushes that you may have set. You might want to, therefore, break from tradition and focus your forces near (not on) roads to reduce the effectiveness of snow. Besides that just watch him carefully, make full use of your unique skills, and counter what he throws at you.

Grit

In the right circumstances Sonja can perform really well against Grit. Most Grit players will rely on forests in FOW to shield their Indirects and you the only CO that can fully counter this. Since your opponent is probably aware of this fact he or she will then try to find a chokepoint and hold it until they spam enough Indirects. You can counter this by using Recons early on to harass Grit's foot soldiers and slow up his attempts to capture cities. This strategy is not fool proof because Grit only needs 6,000 funds to produce one Mobile Artillery. Yet harassing his foot soldiers and keeping his Indirects occupied near his base can buy you enough time to reach a choke point before he does. Also, produce more direct combat units than normal when facing Grit.

Colin

Cheap units means Colin will have a hard time finishing off Sonja's units which equals more decoys to throw against him. Of course, Colin will also be throwing more units at you than most other COs would. The best approach is to fight him fiercely for those early properties and then be defensive until you can start producing more powerful units than him in abundance.

Kanbei

Getting into a fight with your father is not the best idea. Kanbei is one tough CO because he is able to overpower his foes with quality units. Your best tactic is to try and take dad down before he can get enough cities and start producing MD Tanks and Aircraft. A good idea is to use Recons aggressively early on to slow up his capture rate. Besides that, decoys and Indirects work well.

Crystal Guard 292 adds: The key against him is to get as far out into his half of the map as possible, and keep a monetary advantage on him. If you have enough of an advantage, you'll be able to play counters against him (AA vs. Copters, tank vs. AA, ect.) and his stats won't mean much. Another key point against Kanbei is that he is built to make the most out of his attacks, so any attack of his you can waste through him not knowing how much HP something has is well worth it. Kanbei's Samurai Spirit will blow right through Counter Break though, so save that for after SS, or don't give him many opportunities to attack with it (retreating out of range, etc)[.] It could make the player procrastinate it's use [for] a turn or two, Kanebi players tend to be picky with power use. Kanei is also horrible at destroying meatwalls on 2 star terrain, seeing as he has to invest in powerful units, or his SCOP to get through. Kanbei players also fear artillery. I'd make proper use of indirects and make sure to grab the good terrain so SS doesn't make your next turn utter crap. Another strong point against Kanbei is forcing him on multiple fronts. Start getting B-ships out there, and make him build a navy, his prime weakness. The Naval triangle will ensure success against him there because you will outnumber him. Keep AAs on hand because Kanbei's copters are pretty ruthless if you aren't careful.

Sonja

Fighting yourself is a bit tricky. You should follow the advice in my countering Sonja section. Just remember that you will have a hard time ambushing an enemy Sonja player in FOW.

Sensei

Sensei is a lot like Sami with the exception that his air force is far better but his Indirects are not so good. For the most part you should fight Sensei the same way you would fight Sami but don't underestimate his Battle Copters which are often capable of wiping out (or coming very close to it) your units in one attack.

Eagle

You can counter Eagle's air force with a standard mix of A-Airs, Missiles, and even Cruisers. However, Eagle is a truly devastating CO because of his awesome SCOP. Try to form your battle line into layers and make full use of FOW if it is on to hide your units and monitor his air force. Be aware that in FOW Eagle will probably send Recons forward to scout out your units and then use the high mobility of his SCOP to overwhelm you. Therefore, be sure to place your Indirects in forests when Eagle's SCOP is nearly charged to make it harder for him to find and destroy them. Also, if you think Eagle is about to use his SCOP then use your SCOP. If your ground forces are not capable of destroying his air units then you might want to consider producing Jets. An air force is also expensive so focusing on his properties can starve him of necessary resources.

Crystal Guard 292 adds: The basic idea against Eagle is that if he makes a mistake with his air units, they can get annihilated instantly. In air battles, Counter Break renders you pretty much invulnerable to his force. If you bunch a lot of Anti Aairs together, then Eagle can't be sure what's a threat and what isn't. If you keep tanks around too, he can't effectively attack them to find out. The idea is basically to play to Sonja's main strategy, and to make sure that he doesn't know what is what. Sonja's land forces should make quick work of Eagle's as well, but she's pretty much superior to him when it comes to the skies. Outside of a pure air battle, Sonja's SCOP will help far more than Eagle's will. The main thing to be wary against is Lighting Strike though. The best counter to Lighting Strike is to, again, make sure he doesn't know what is what. If you've got several AAs, and one is very low HP, move a fully HP unit to where it was, or join onto it. It'll throw Eagle off quite a bit.

Drake

Drake is a very annoying CO to fight. His CO powers not only hurts your units but also reduce their fuel. This makes it more difficult to overcome him with a strong air force. However, an air force, when applicable, is still the best option so just make sure that you have plenty of APCs. Overall, Drake is only average on ground (excluding his ability to ignore rain) so use standard counters and your unique skills. Like Olaf, be careful about when you set up an ambush because Drake's COP can inform him of hidden units during FOW.

Jess

Jess is a tough and versatile CO. You will probably be dragged into a vicious ground war with her but don't be surprised if you start seeing air or naval units in abundance. She is the most balanced of the specialist CO's so there is really no special strategy you need against her. Just be aware of the refueling and reloading benefits of her CO powers.

Flak

Like Nell, Flak is dangerous because of his ability to deliver serious damage with weaker units while using his CO Powers. However, day-to-day he can experience a drop in attack power but he is also capable of delivering more damage too. Like against Nell, quality might not be the best approach. Other than that no specific strategy is required against him.

Adder

Adder is a very flexible CO and will often gain the first strike with his powers. Yet his movement also allows him to reinforce his lines faster and to retreat further away if necessary. Furthermore, because his CO Meter is so short he will be able to use his extra movement quite often. Trying to hold a chokepoint against Adder is a good strategy because his movement will not help him break through (Unless he has air units). Also, be aware that Adder is capable of using his COP twice in a row.

Lash

I consider Lash Sonja's arch-enemy. They are both tactical geniuses who rely heavily on terrain. Because of this you must be very conscious of when the terrain is becoming more beneficial to Lash's attack boost than ensuring more of your units are able to counterattack. If possible try to fight her in the air where her CO powers are utterly useless. If you do stick to thick terrain then also be aware of her units ability to ignore the movement cost of terrain when either of her COP is activated. Use more Indirects or more MD Tanks than normal if you can't build an air force.

Hawke

With Hawke's superior attack value he is a difficult opponent to overcome. However, his CO Meter is very long which means he won't be using his powers that often. Be offensive because Hawk does not gain a defense bonus along with the attack bonus. Be sure to make effective use of Sonja's usual bag of tricks (hidden HP, SCOP ect...) along with standard counters.

Sturm

Sturm is an overpowered CO and he has no real weaknesses. Do your best with using decoys and try to counter what he throws at you.

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11. Opinions on Sonja

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This section of my guide will include opinions on Sonja in addition to my own. Please contact me if you want to share your opinion on Sonja.

My Opinion on Sonja

Sonja is an challenging and well rounded CO with a host of unique abilities. She does not deserve her underrated reputation for games that do not have FOW on. Her hidden HP, for human opponents, and counterattack skills function just as well outside of FOW and keep her from being a bland CO. Finally, to win with Sonja you have to be strategically flexible and use your head. The specialist COs can often get away with implementing one strategy over and over again that utilizes their best troops to overcome their foes. Meanwhile, CO's with particular good CO powers can often slap together several units, activate their CO power, and overpower the foe with ease. Sonja must try new things and react accordingly to the terrain around her, the type of opponents she is facing, and the rules that are currently in play for that battle.

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12. People I want to Thank
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End of Guide
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