



2nd Armored Division: "Hell on Wheels" (Spearhead 10)

Steven Smith

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Spearhead Series; This series looks at the cutting edge of war, and deals exclusively with units capable of operating independently in the forefront of battle. Each volume in the series examines the chosen unit's origins and history, its organisation and order of battle, its battle history theatre by theatre, its insignia and markings. Also covered are biographies of the most important commanders of each unit. Each title ends with an assessment of unit effectiveness - as seen by the unit itself, by its opponents and in the light of more recent historical research. The books also include a detailed reference section with a critical biography, a listing of relevant museums and web sites, plus information about re-enactment groups and memoriais.

US 2nd Armored Division; The US 2nd Armored Division, nicknamed 'Hell on Wheels', fought with distinction in the European Theatre of Operations and was the first US division to reach the Elbe and to enter Berlin. It was commanded by the charismatic Major-General George S Patton Jr from January 1941 to February 1942. Elements of 2nd Armored first saw action in North Africa, landing at Casablanca, 8 November 1942, and later taking part in the fighting at Bela, Tunisia, but the division as whole did not enter combat until the invasion of Sicily, where it performed well. After the Sicillan campaign, the division trained in England for the invasion of Normandy, landing on D+3, and going into action near Carentan; it would go on to play a significant role in the Falaise Gap battles, subsequently racing across France through Belgium and into Germany at Schimmert on 18 September 1944. The division also played an important role during the Ardennes offensive, blunting the German Fifth Panzer Army's penetration of American lines and going on to reduce the Bulge in January. The 2nd crossed the Rhine on 27 March and was the first US division to reach the Elbe at Schonebeck on 11 April.

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