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Battle of Coral Sea - II

Lead: In the May 1942 Battle of the Coral Sea, allied naval forces halted the Japanese southern advance on New Guinea and Australia, but not without severe losses, including that of the Lady Lex.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: One of the great disappointments to the Japanese after Pearl Harbor was that the surprise attack failed to catch the aircraft carriers, *Enterprise, Lexington and Saratoga*, which were at sea. This

failure would return to bite them badly in the Coral Sea six months later, yet in the heady days following the initial success in late 1941 Tokyo decided to expand its ambitions by moving south toward Australia. The most immediate target was Port Moseby in southeastern Papua New Guinea.

The Japanese forces including three carriers entered the Coral Sea and there encountered two American carrier groups around *Yorktown and Lexington* and an allied cruiser squadron. Over two days, May 7 and 8, aircraft from the opposing carriers had at each in confusing encounters in which mistakes were made on both sides. First blood was drawn by the

Americans when they found and sank *Shoho*, a small carrier which had led in the invasion of Tugali in the previous week. “Scratch one Flattop.” A night attack by the Japanese was unsuccessful and they endured significant air losses.

The next day Japanese aircraft sank *Lexington* and damaged *Yorktown*. One Japanese carrier was badly damaged while the other escaped relatively unscathed. The Japanese lost more planes, the U.S. more ships and both commands decided to withdraw. While Coral Sea is considered a tactical draw, the results were dramatic. Their southern advance was halted, the assault on Port Moseby having failed. Japanese

**strategy turned to defense of its gains
and the allies began the long road to
victory in the Pacific.**

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

Resources

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