

Great Battles of History for DBA 3



A Scenario Book of 12 Historical Battles using Phil and Sue Barker's
Ancient and Medieval Wargame Rules

The DBA Development Team & Friends

General Editor: Joe Collins

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Published by Joe Collins

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DBA Version 3.0 is a quick play set of wargame rules with army lists for ancient and medieval battles written by Phil and Sue Barker. DBA is published by Wargames Research Group Limited.

Front Cover: Ancient Greek Vase in the Louvre... Public Domain Photo

Back Cover: Photos by James Rogers

Special Thanks to Phil and Sue... without them, none of this madness would have happened.

Preface:

Sometimes frustration creates opportunities. In 2006 I had just received my copy of the new DBMM. While I enjoyed standard battle sized DBA, my interest had always been in refighting the great battles of history. Playing Big Battle DBA and historical scenarios was fairly fun, but some periods simply didn't work well. They didn't produce historical results or a satisfying narrative. I tried to no avail to move my club to DBM to fight larger historical battles, thinking it would address these issues, but no one was really interested in anything more complicated than DBA. I was hoping in the new DBMM to see a slightly more complex version of DBA that would fix my problems with DBA 2.2.

Needless to say, I was disappointed. This of course wasn't DBMM or Phil Barker's fault. Phil had written DBMM as a replacement for DBM for DBM players, not as a replacement for DBA for Joe Collins. Imagine that.

So, I started to experiment with changes to DBA. I eventually took to making my own modifications for historical battles. My club dubbed these modifications somewhat impishly DBJ- "De Bellis Josephus". I never was completely happy with the end result.

Finally, in 2012 I heard news of the development of DBA 3.0. Eager to participate and perhaps help correct some of the historical issues I experienced in 2.2, I started playing the public test copies and offering feedback. Eventually I was asked to join the development group.

The development group initially concentrated on the standard sized battle game. Changes were made to Spear allowing side support, Blade and Pike pursued, the combat factors for Elephants were changed, rear support was offered for Light Horse, Bow range was lengthened, and movement rates were greatly increased. These changes all worked well in the standard game. Finally, we started to test the big battle and historical battle games. After the first test, I realized I had the rules I wanted. My frustration was gone.

After the publishing of the rules and disbandment of the development group, I took the next logical step. I asked the group if they were interested in producing a book of battles showcasing the strength we had found in the new DBA 3 as a historical battle game. Many responded. In the process we added other new folks to the group that were fans of DBA 3.

This book is the result. The battles featured come from a wide swath of history. I am amazed at the breadth of knowledge and the amount of care that went into building each scenario. I am also astounded at how a short and fairly simple set of rules can produce a game that renders historical results and a believable historical narrative over 5000 years of military history. Did I also mention that the game is tremendous fun?

So, to the team of contributors, you guys have been great. You took my idea and outline and produced work that went far beyond my initial vision. So to Bob, Charlie, Dave, Doug, Graham, John, Keith, Pat, Phil S., Robert, and especially Phil and Sue Barker, I say, thank you.

My sincere hope is that all playing the battles we present in this book have as much fun with them as we did. Have fun playing DBA 3!

Joe Collins

ΓΕΛΑ 405 BC

A Clash of Colonies in the western Mediterranean Sea

“ . . . Ares, lord of strife,

Who doth the swaying scales of battle hold,

War’s money-changer, giving dust for gold . . . “

From Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon* translated by E. D. A. Morshead



The Historical Background:

The Phoenicians and Greeks were great sailors. Between 900 and 500 BCE they established colonies in the western Mediterranean, Spain, North Africa and the islands of the western sea. The Greeks mainly settled in Italy and on the island of Sicily. Of the Phoenician colonies, the North African city of Carthage was the most powerful. The Sicilian Greek cities such as Syracuse, Akragas, and Gela flourished, often surpassing their eastern cousins in wealth and architectural splendor. The island of Sicily, with its fertile volcanic soil and wheat-filled plains, would be the major battleground and grand prize in the Greek-Punic Wars of 600--265 BCE.

The first Greek-Punic war ended in disaster for Carthage at the battle of Himera in 480, where a coalition of Greek armies led by Gelon of Syracuse and Theron of Akragas decisively defeated the Carthaginians. The humiliated Punic commander, Hamilcar Mago, was either killed through Greek trickery or died by his own hand. Carthage left Sicilian Greeks alone for 70 years.

After Syracuse destroyed the Athenian Sicilian Expedition of 413, the people of Segesta, an Ionian-Greek/Elymian city in western Sicily who had allied themselves with the Athenians, feared Syracusan reprisals. When the neighboring rival Doric-Greek city of Selinus made territorial demands and threatened war, Segesta sent ambassadors to Carthage to ask for aid. Hannibal Mago, grandson of the disgraced Hamilcar, recognized an opportunity to expand Carthaginian power and exact personal revenge on the Sicilian Greeks. Hannibal invaded Sicily with a large army of Libyan, Campanian, and Iberian mercenaries, sacked and destroyed Selinus, and won the second Battle of Himera in 409. The second Greek-Punic War had begun.

In 406, Hannibal Mago invaded Sicily with another army of mercenaries, planning to advance along the island's south coast and, one by one, subjugate or destroy the Greek city-states. Wealthy Akragas would be first. After a long siege and a major battle outside the walls, the majority of the Akragans abandoned their city to the Carthaginians and fled west toward the Greek city of Gela. The Carthaginians entered Akragas and slaughtered most of the citizens who remained. Hannibal died during the siege when a plague struck his army, and his cousin Himilco Mago took command and continued the campaign. In the spring of 405, after wintering in Akragas, the Carthaginians systematically razed the captured city. What they could not carry off as plunder, they burnt; what they could not burn, they toppled or defaced.

The city of Gela on the center of the southern coast of the island would be the next target. First the Punic army devastated the land around Gela as far east as Camarina, and then laid siege to the city, probably on its western flank. The people of Gela desperately held out and begged the western Greek communities for help. Young Dionysius of Syracuse — he was in his mid-twenties when he ruthlessly made himself Tyrant of that city — gathered an army of Sicilian Greeks, hired mercenaries, and reinforced by an expedition of Italiots, the Greeks of Italy, marched west to Gela. After a few weeks of indecisive skirmishing, Dionysius crafted a bold and elaborate plan to attack the Carthaginians and break the siege.

Fighting the Battle:

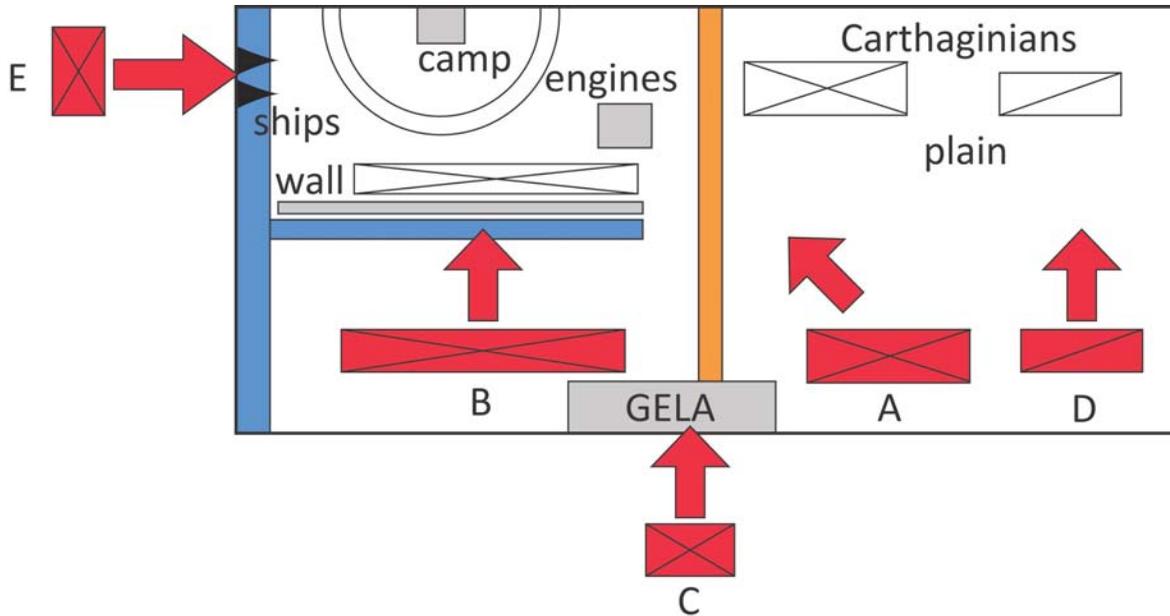
Most of what we know about the battle of Gela comes from the writings of Diodorus the Sicilian, a Greek who wrote during the first century BCE. The following scenario is a loose interpretation of the historical battle and is not designed to be a balanced game. The layout of the battlefield is taken from details in Diodorus and from aerial views of the contemporary city of Gela available on Google maps. We imagine the battle took place on the western side of the city from the sea out onto the Sicilian plain. The western approach is dominated by a hill, steep near the sea and more gently sloping on its landward side. Between the hill and the town, a small stream flows down from the plain to the sea. The stream may not have existed in ancient times, but for our scenario we will say that it did.

The Carthaginians devastated the land around the city, so burnt crops, orchards of fallen fruit and olive trees, and ruins of farmhouses and estates no doubt dotted the landscape outside the city walls. On the DBA tabletop these features are represented by enclosures for ruined farms, plough for abandoned fields, and woods for ruined orchards. A road leads from the city's Akragantine Gate toward the devastated towns of western Sicily. The Carthaginians "threw a trench about their encampment" represented on the tabletop by a low wall lining the Carthaginian side of the stream and extending part way onto the plain.

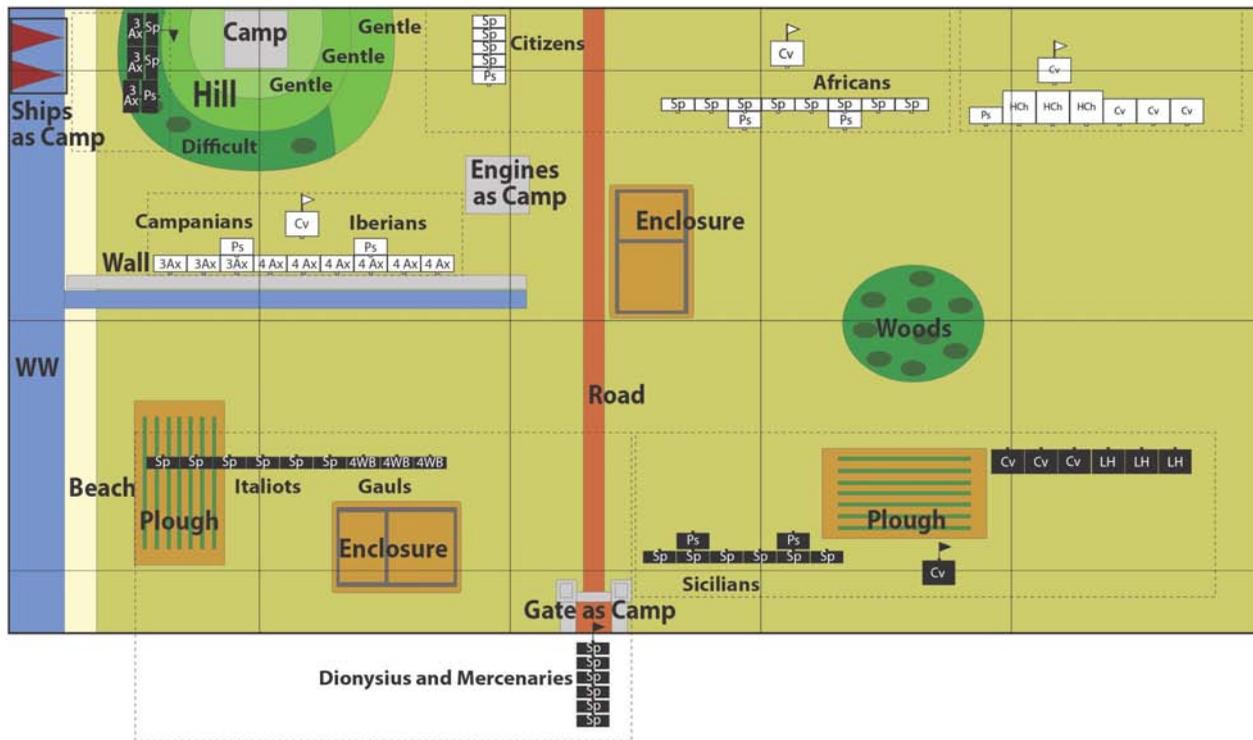
The Syracusans and Carthaginians each have two camps. The first Punic camp crowns the hill. A second has been added to represent the siege engines which were a major objective of the Syracusan plan of attack. During the battle, the Syracusans made a littoral landing (an interesting feature of the DBA rules) on the coast behind the Punic lines. The-beached ships that carried their amphibious troops constitute one Greek camp and the gate of Gela the other.

Himilco expected to fight the battle mostly on the plain, so he assigned the lighter Campanian and Iberian mercenaries to hold the wall and camp, then deployed his heavier infantry and mounted troops farther to the North. Dionysius planned to flank the Carthaginian position by landing a small force by sea beyond the entrenchments, capture the Punic camp and roll up the right wing of the Carthaginian army. His plan was bold and complex—perhaps too complex.

In Book XIII, chapter 109 of his Library of History, Diodorus the Sicilian writes, "...Dionysius divided his infantry into three groups, and one division, which he formed of the Sicilian Greeks (**A**), he ordered to advance against the entrenched camp of their adversaries with the city on their left flank; the second division, which he formed of allies (**B**), he commanded to drive along the shore with the city on their right; and he himself with the contingent of mercenaries (**C**) advanced through the city against the place where the Carthaginian engines of war were stationed. And to the cavalry (**D**) he gave orders that, as soon as they saw the infantry advancing, they should cross the river and overrun the plain ... and to the troops on the ships (**E**) his orders were, as soon as the Italian Greeks made their attack, to sail against the camp of the enemy."



We construct the order of battle for Gela directly from the army lists in DBA 3.0 with no changes. Each list is multiplied by three, and divided into three commands as prescribed in the Big Battle rules on page 13 of the purple rulebook. The battle will be fought as a standard Big Battle DBA game with a few special rules that are listed after the order of battle.



Order of Battle:

II/9 Syracusan:

1st command, left, (littoral landing)- Break Point 2

1x Sp General, 1x Sp, 3x 3Ax, 1x Ps

2nd command, center and reserve- Break Point 5

6x Sp, 3x 4WB

Off table in reserve

1x Sp General CinC (Dionysius), 5xSp

3rd command right flank- Break Point 5

1x general Cv, 6x Sp, 3x Cv, 3x LH, 2x Ps

I/61a Early Carthaginian:

1st command, Cavalry- Break Point 3

1x Cv general, 3x HCh, 3x Cv, 1x Ps

2nd command, center- Break Point 6

1x Cv general CinC , 8x Sp, 2x Ps

on table reserve

4x Sp, 1xPs

3rd command, at the wall- Break Point 4

1x Cv general, 6x 4Ax, 3x 3Ax, 2x Ps

Special rules:

---Black (Syracuse) takes first bound.

---On the second and, if necessary, subsequent Syracusan bounds, before pips are rolled, both sides dice. If the Syracusan die roll is higher, Dionysius may enter the battlefield with his reserve on the road at the city gate for 2 pips.

---The Syracusan center command suffers no penalty for being out of command range until Dionysius enters the battlefield.

---A command that sacks an enemy camp raises its element break point by one.

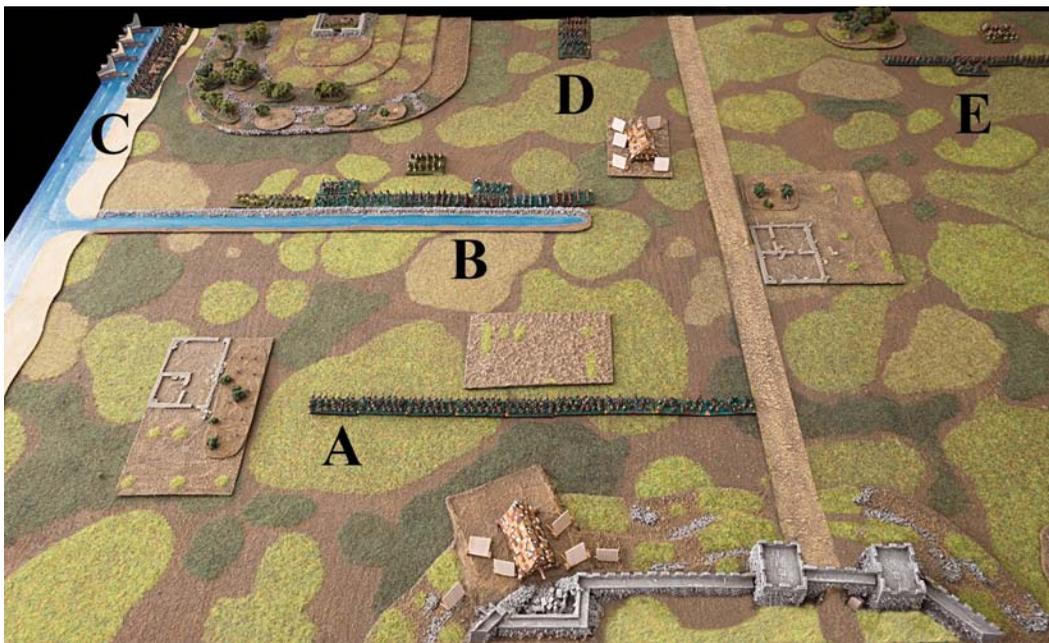
---If the Carthaginians sack the Syracusan Gate--as--Camp, they have captured Gela and won the battle.

---An element in full front edge contact with the non--water side of the wall adds a plus one to its die score if in close combat. An element or group of elements making contact with an enemy element or group of elements defending a wall conforms to it. Wall and stream affect movement as rough going.

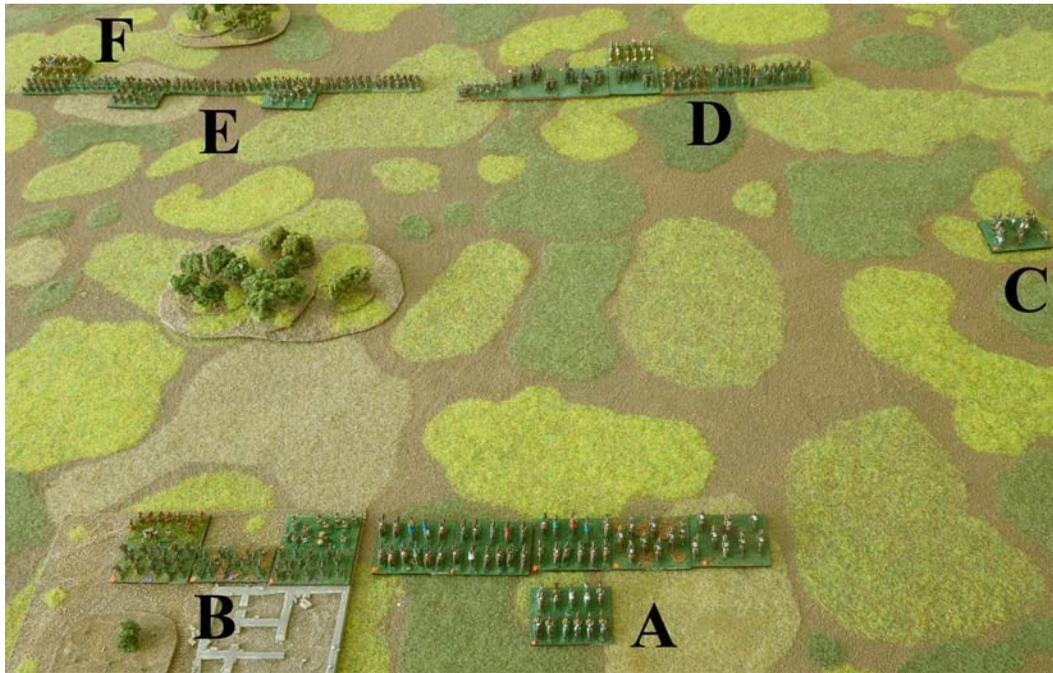
---Each army has two camps—the Syracusan ships and Gate of Gela, and the Carthaginian engines and hilltop camp. The Greek ships fight as an immobile 3Bw.

The Game:

Here are photographs of Gela using 6mm miniatures on 15mm scale bases. The battle was fought on a 32”x 64” tabletop. Although some changes have been made to the scenario since this example was played, we have included these highlights to illustrate how DBA 3 can be successfully run in various scales.



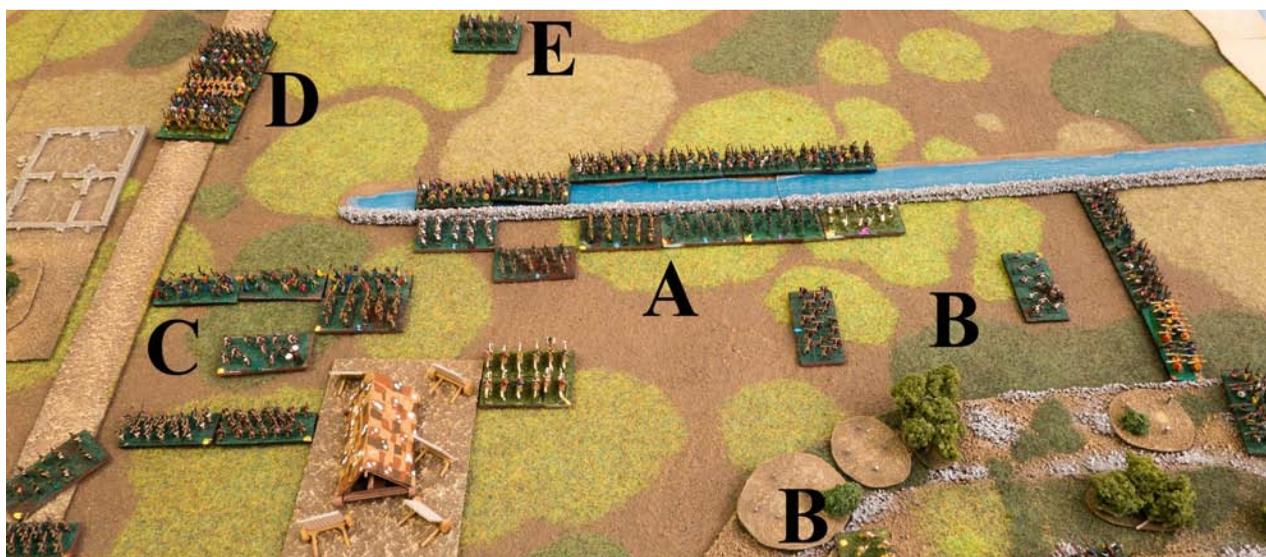
Dionysius launches his surprise attack. The Italiot allies (A) advance to assault the Capanians and Iberians defending the wall (B). The amphibious command (C) lands on the beach behind the Punic lines. Out on the plain Himilco (E) with command center awaits the main Greek attack while citizen spearmen (D) stand in reserve behind the engines of war.



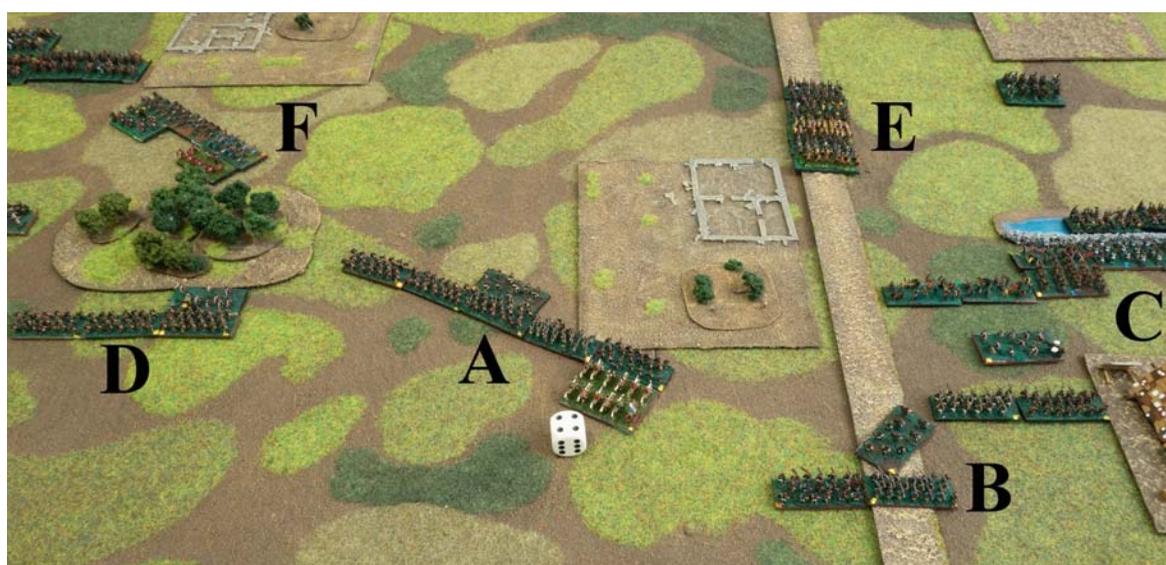
Greek cavalry (A) supported by Sicilian auxilia and light infantry (B) ride out on the Syracusan right. An element of light horse (C) races for the Carthaginian flank. Across the battlefield the Punic chariots and cavalry (D) trot onto the plain as African spearmen (E) form line of battle. Surrounded by his mounted bodyguard, Himilco sits, still waiting.



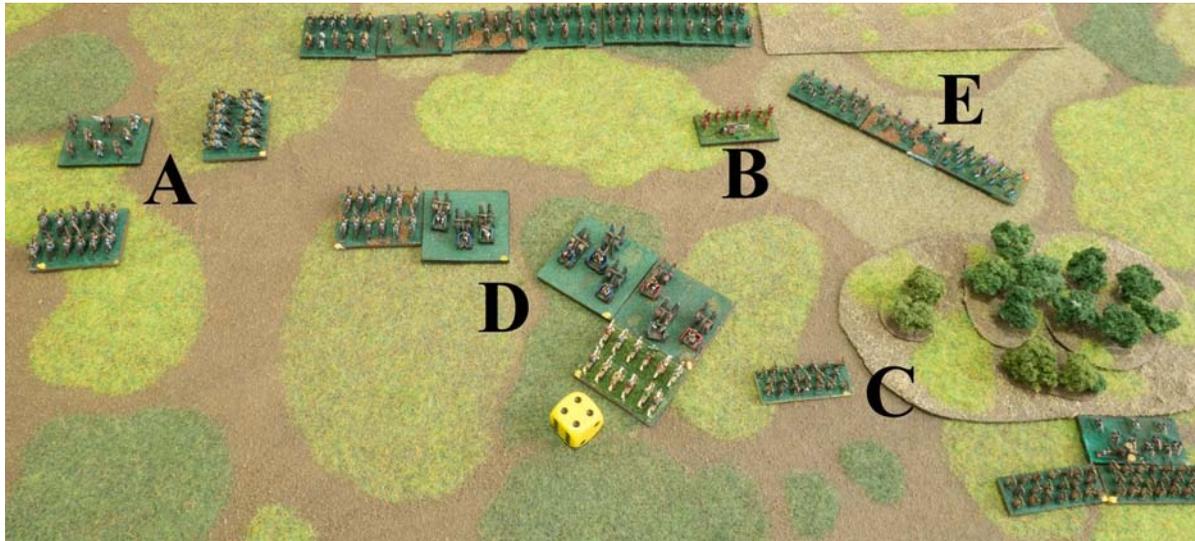
The flanking command disembarks from the beached galleys. Defying all the odds (he rolls high dice to enter table early), Dionysius has managed to drive his Greek mercenaries through the crowded city and arrives according to plan at the Akragantine gate.



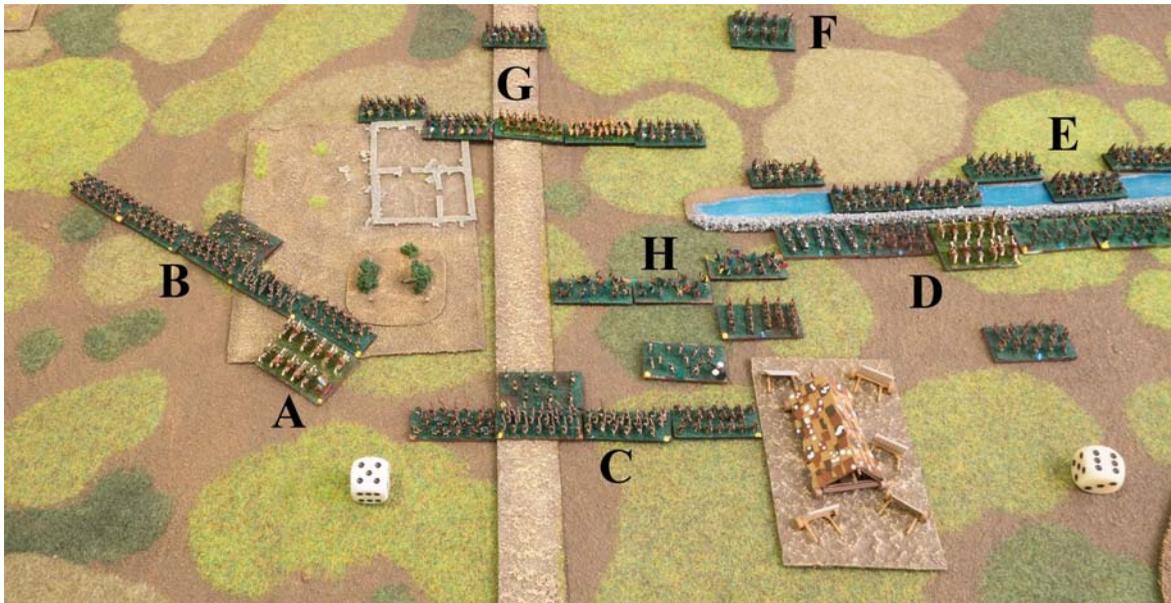
The Iberians and Campanians (A) holding the wall deploy skirmishers (B) to delay the Greeks attempting to roll up their flank. Gauls (C) fight their way closer to the Punic engines. Dionysius (E) cheers on the Syracusan attack as his mercenaries (D) march down the road.



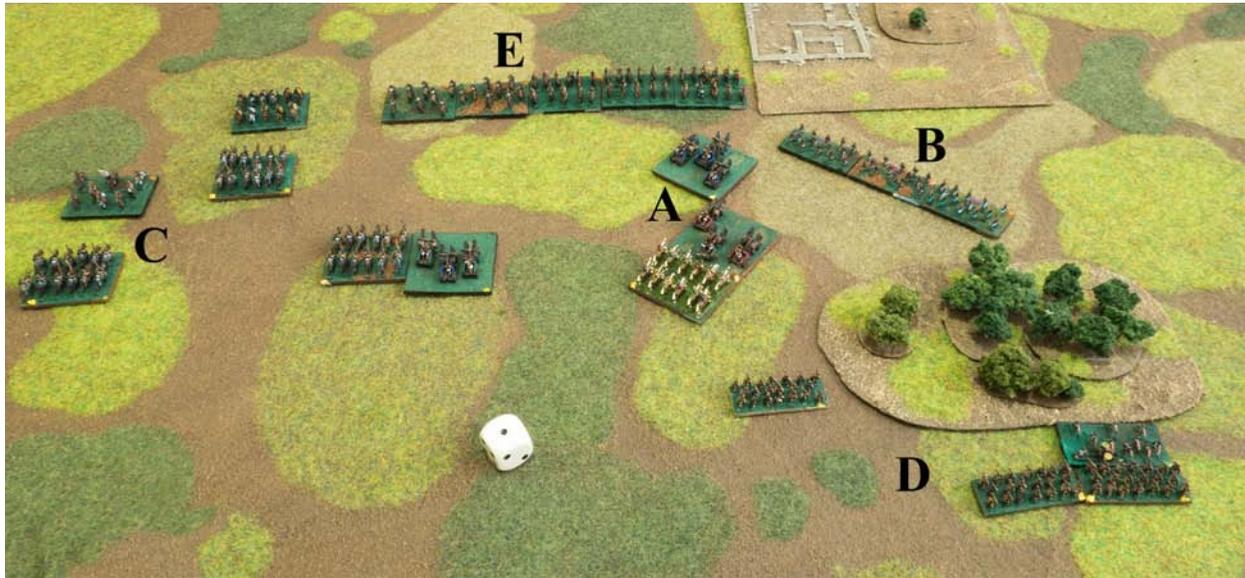
Himilco has recovered from the surprise attack. His right (C) is holding — for now. The Citizen spearmen (B) are deploying on the road. The Sicilian infantry (F) wheel outward to help their cavalry, and the Greek mercenaries (E) double--time down the road, their flank in the air. The center is wide open. If only that ruined farmstead (enclosure= rough going) was not in the path of his spears (A)... it is time to send in the cavalry.



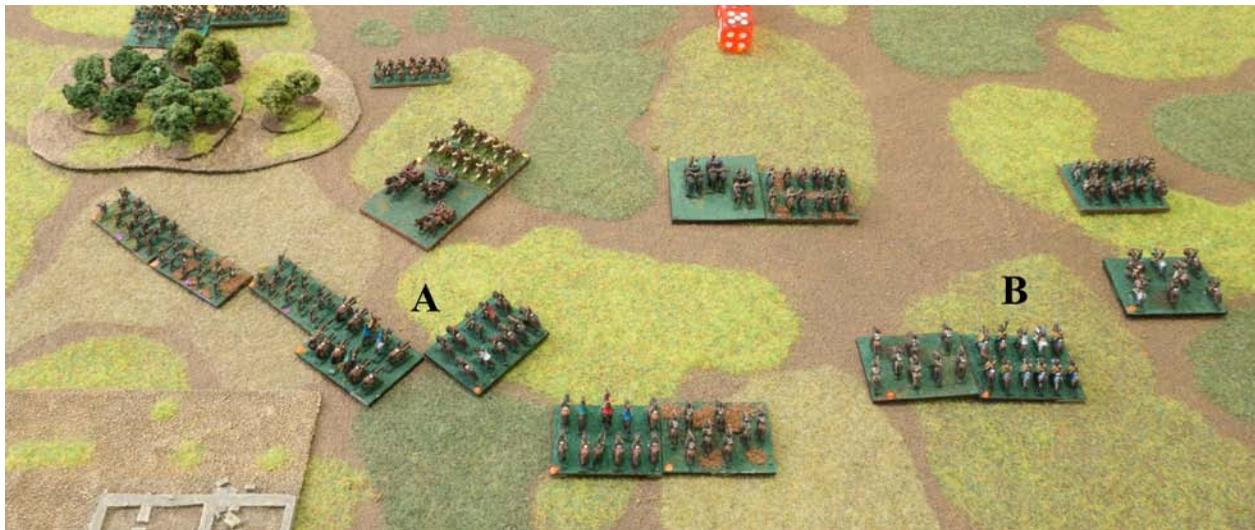
Punic cavalry supported by African spears (C) destroys a unit of light infantry and makes another flee (B). An element of Syracusan light horse (A) surrounded by the enemy (contacted on front and flank) repels its heavier foes. A line of Sicilian auxilia (E) has moved to support the Greek attack. If the Punic left wing commander can charge his heavy chariots (D) into those light troops, he could easily break the Greek right flank.



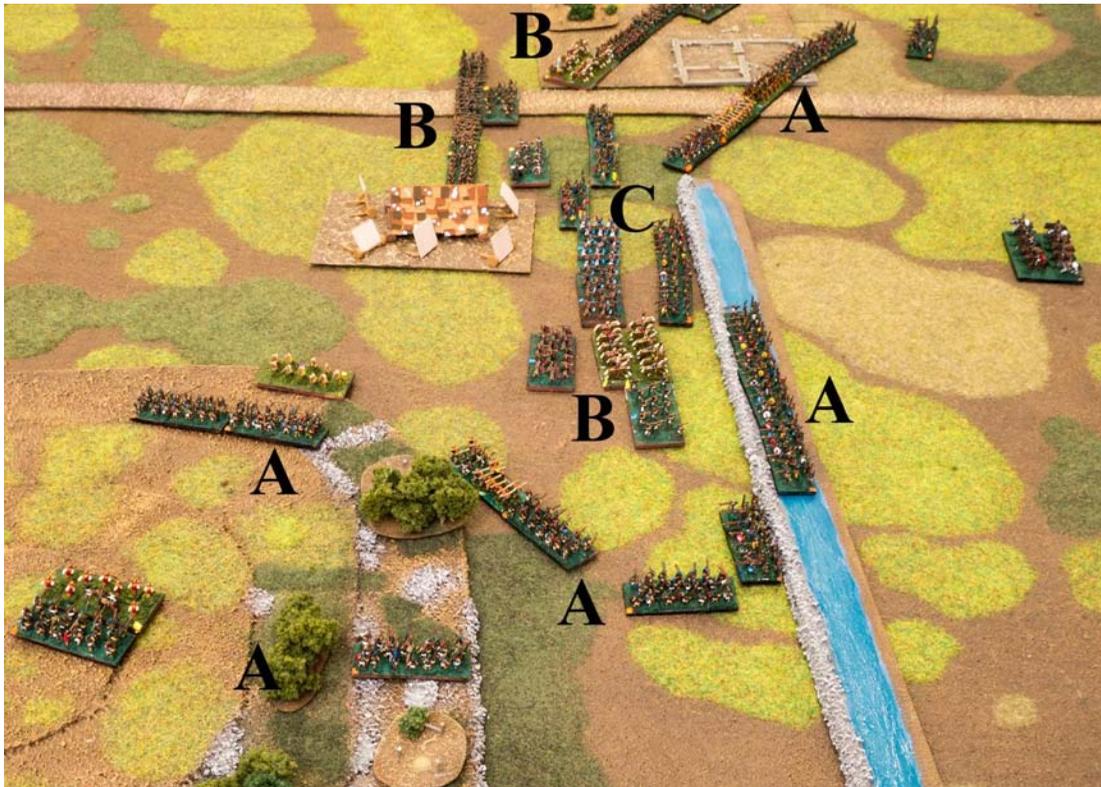
The battle is going well for Himilco (A). His right flank is holding steady (D) driving the Italiot Hoplites (E) back from the wall. Even the wild Gauls are stalled before the engines. His African and Citizen spearmen form a solid wall of shield and spear and wheel onto the flank of the enemy line. He can see Dionysius (F) urging his mercenary Hoplites (G) to form line of battle. He feels confident (high pips). What can go wrong?



The Punic cavalry and chariots stall (low pips). The few chariots (A) that have been victorious recklessly pursue their beaten opponents. The Sicilian auxilia (B) stands exposed. Other elements (C) stand and do nothing. Himilco sends no orders (pips) to the African spear (D). The Greek cavalry (E) waits.



The Syracusans countercharge. They flank a unit of chariots and destroy it (A). A Carthaginian squadron (B) offers little resistance and is easily unhorsed and destroyed (1 to 6 die roll). Greek army seems infused with new energy (rolls three fives for movement pips). The Punic left flank breaks.



The Syracusan drive continues all along the line (A). Gauls (C) punch through to the siege engines. The seaborne Greeks hook around the flank of the Campanians (B) and destroy them. The Punic right wing breaks. (Two out of three commands are demoralized.) In the center, their right and left flanks exposed, the African and Citizen spearmen (B) break and run. Carthage has lost the battle.

The Aftermath:

Historically it was not so easy.

Dionysius' plan was too complex for the armies of the time. The Italiots did manage to attack the entrenchments, and the littoral landing went off as planned. But the Sicilian infantry were late getting around the city and onto the field, and the Greek mercenaries under Dionysius, delayed by their passage through the city, never made it to the battle. The Carthaginians defeated the Greek divisions, piece by piece, with the Italiots suffering most. The Greeks retreated to their town and camp.

Although the defeat was not decisive, Dionysius, his army, and the entire population of Gela abandoned the city and retreated east toward Syracuse and the other towns of Greek Sicily. The Punic army occupied and pillaged Gela and the war went on.

Sources:

Bibliotheca historica. Diodorus Siculus

Hannibal's Campaigns. Barns & Noble... Tony Bath

Roman Warfare. Orion Publishing Group... Adrian Goldsworthy

↑THE HYDASPES, 326 BC

Alexander Invades India

Porus chose...

*to advance towards Alexander with all his force,
and to fight to a finish
against the strongest part of the Macedonians
and their King himself.*

Arrian, History of Alexander and Indica (Loeb)



“Alexander and his Companions Advance: Screened by Dahae Horse Archers”

The Historical Background:

Alexander III (“the Great”) had united Macedonia and Greece, conquered the Achaemenid Persian Empire, and subdued much of Central Asia in ten years of campaigning marked by strategic vision, tactical genius, and diplomatic savvy. Invited into an alliance by the King of Taxala, he pushed through the Khyber Pass into India. Porus, King of the Pauravas, dared to oppose him and marched to meet him at the Hydaspes River.

Porus took up a strong position along the east bank of the Hydaspes, opposite Alexander on the west bank. It was May; rains and snowmelt had rendered the river unfordable. Alexander conducted recurrent feints up and down the river, nurturing Porus’ inclination to believe he would not attempt a serious crossing until the water level dropped. The Indians became complacent about the Macedonian feints, giving less and less attention to them as time went on. Then one night Alexander force marched over half of his army 25 kilometers upstream, met up with a flotilla of carefully gathered boats, and forced a crossing. The balance of Alexander’s army remained in place to distract Porus.

Although surprised, Porus reacted quickly to Alexander's brilliant turning movement. He dispatched his son with 2,000 cavalry to delay Alexander – or perhaps force him back across the river. This small force was quickly overwhelmed, and Porus' son killed. Meanwhile Porus left a fraction of his force to oppose Alexander's rear detachment still across the river and marched with his main body to meet Alexander. He formed up on open ground between the Hydaspes River and a difficult line of hills to greatly restrict tactical maneuver.

Fighting the Battle:

Modern reconstructions and ancient accounts of the Battle of the Hydaspes vary. They do share some common features: the denuding of Indian cavalry from one flank to reinforce against Alexander's attack on the other, the dramatic collision of elephants and phalanx, and the decisiveness of Alexander's daring cavalry envelopment lead by his general, Coenus. Other details are less clear and less agreed, including the route and specific target of Coenus' maneuver. The reconstruction below is the authors' best guess of how the pieces came together.

Sources differ with respect to the numbers involved in the battle itself. We prefer Major General J.F.C. Fuller's account, which envisions 5,500 cavalry and 15,000 infantry for Alexander, and 3,600 cavalry, 30,000 infantry, 180 chariots and 200 elephants for Porus. Thus the Indians considerably outnumbered the Greeks. DBA eschews a point system and achieves balanced play by allowing an equal number of elements to each side. The logic is that some elements represent more manpower (or horsepower) than others based on training, physical vigor, equipment, morale and other factors. This logic seems particularly appropriate in the case of the Hydaspes. Given the BBDBA standard of 36 elements per army as discussed below, this comes to each Macedonian cavalry element representing 460, each Macedonian infantry element 625, each Indian cavalry element 600, and each Indian infantry element 1,600. This seems plausible, and broadly comports with the parameters of DBA. Each elephant element would represent about 20 elephants and each chariot element 30 chariots. These smaller numbers can be explained by the physical and psychological impact of such units.

Order of Battle:

We sought to reconstruct the Battle of the Hydaspes as a 36 element Big Battle DBA using the Classical Indian (II/3a) and Alexandrian Imperial (II/15) army lists from DBA 3.0. We found these were a good fit. We took the Indian list as it is. For Alexander, we substituted cavalry for the option to deploy either an elephant or an artillery element. There is no evidence he brought artillery with him in his hasty river crossing and ample evidence that he left the allied elephants he had with him with his rear detachment holding his original position. There is also evidence that he was accompanied by high quality Central Asian cavalry used to flesh out his depleted hard charging Companions. Coenus' detachment certainly behaved more like DBA "Cavalry" than like DBA "Knights", hardly charging "at the first instance".

Both armies deployed large central commands with relatively simple straightforward missions: the phalanx covered by skirmishers in the case of Alexander and the elephants and archers in the case of the Indians. Both fielded two smaller and nimbler commands consisting of cavalry, chariotry and light foot. Believing Coenus' encircling movement was planned, we included the light troops necessary to facilitate it in his command. The orders of battle broke out as:

Alexandrian Imperial II/15

Alexander's Command: Break Point 4

- 1x 3Kn- CinC (Alexander)
- 6x 3Kn- Knights (the Companions)
- 3x LH- Light Horse (Central Asian Horse Archers)

Coenus' Command: Break Point 3

- 3x Cv- Cavalry (a mix of Companions and Central Asians)
- 3x 3Ax- Auxilia (Agrianians)

The Macedonian Central Command: Break Point 8

- 18x 3Pk- Pike (the Phalangites)
- 3x Ps- Psiloi (Skirmishers)

Classical Indian II/3a

The Indian Left Wing: Break Point 4

- 2x HCh- Heavy Chariots
- 2x LCh- Light Chariots
- 4x Cv- Cavalry
- 3x 4Ax- Auxilia (Javelinmen)

The Indian Center: Break Point 6

- 9x El- Elephants
- 9x 4Lb Bowmen

The Indian Right Wing: Break Point 3

- 2x HCh Heavy Chariots
- 2x Cv Cavalry
- 3x Ps Psiloi (Tribal Archers)

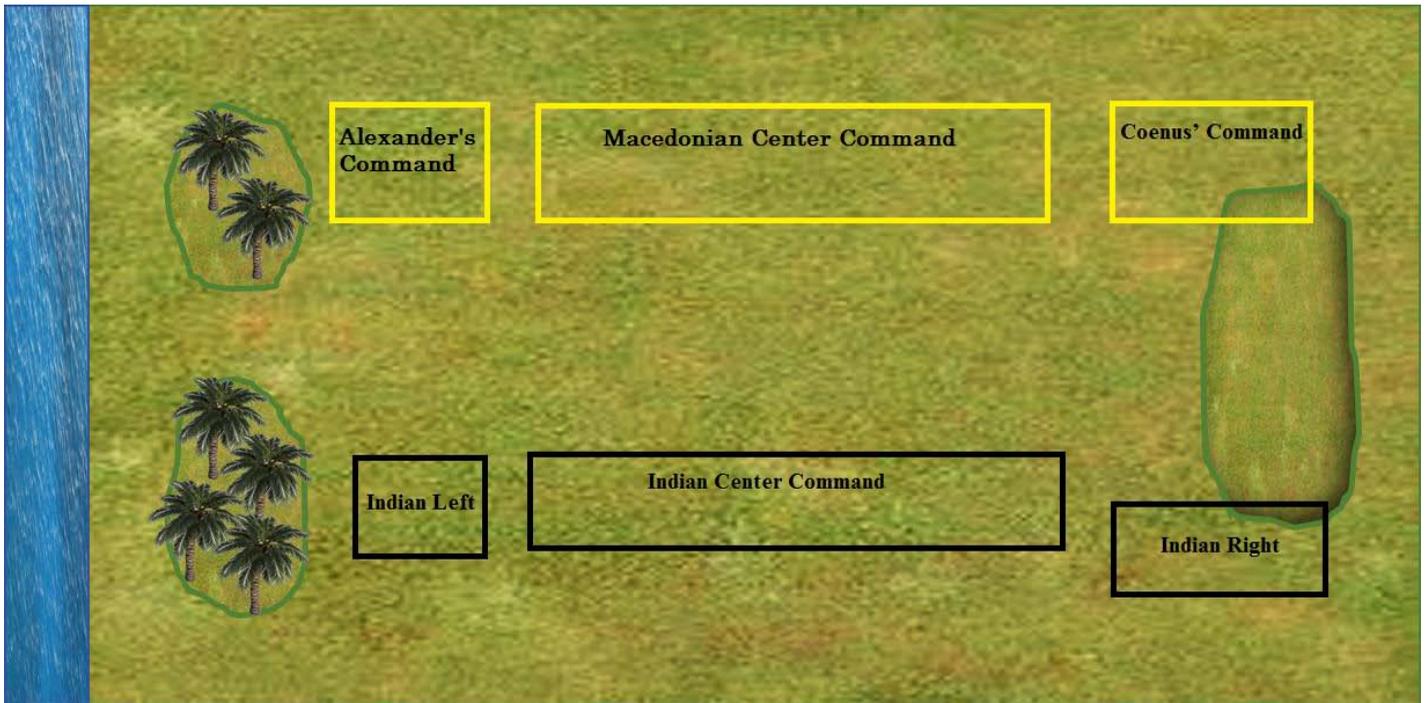
Alexander demanded the greatest maneuver from Coenus, and made him his "high pip" command. His Central Command was to move straight forward on order, and became the "low pip" command. Alexander remained "middle pip". Porus, recognizing the complexity of moving elephants, kept his Central Command "middle pip". His left wing became "high pip", and his smaller right wing "low pip".

One Element from each command except Alexander's is nominated to be the general's element for that command. Porus commands the Indian Center.

Special Rules:

Recognizing Coenus' striking performance, we permitted cavalry accompanied by a cavalry general to move like light horse with respect to making second or third moves.

The Map:



Map Notes:

The map is 48" by 30" scaled for 15mm. On the long axis the playing area extends from the east bank of the Hydaspes River to a range of particularly difficult hills. Heavy vegetation appears in patches close to the river. The range of hills closest to the battlefield mask a defile passable by mounted troops – if not blocked, or held up by light troops along either side of this defile. It seems that Alexander's scouts had brought him word of this defile, whereas Porus' had not. Porus entrusted his security on this flank to a thin screen of tribal archers.

The Game (Reconstructing the Historical Battle):

Porus advances his center with a line of elephants in front of the bulk of his infantry. Alexander's phalangites poise to meet them, with skirmishers in front to break up the elephants' orderly formation before impact. Porus divides his chariotry and cavalry between his two wings, with light troops to secure the rough terrain just beyond them on both flanks. Alexander advances with a right wing that visibly overmatches the Indian left. Not only are the numbers of his mounted troops greater, his Companions ("Knights") are more lethal than the predominantly "Cavalry" formation that opposes them.



“Initial Set Up”

As Porus’ elephants close, the skirmishers are hit and recoil, drawing the elephants who have opposed them out of formation. The elephants encounter the massed phalangites at a bit of a disadvantage, and their line becomes even more ragged because of obligatory advances or recoils. Meanwhile Porus’ right flank, recognizing the overmatch on the Indian left, redeploys to assist their embattled colleagues.



“Elephants Attack; Indian Right Flank Cavalry Redeploy”

Meanwhile Alexander’s fierce Agrianians have fallen upon the Indian skirmishers in the hills along the Indian right flank. This opens the defile for Coenus’ cavalry, which has sped by forced marching from behind Alexander to round the Indian right.



“Coenus Envelopes the Indian Right”

Alexander’s attack, as expected, has placed the Indian left at a significant disadvantage. Lines are beginning to fray, some cavalry have been eliminated, and auxilia have been drawn to plug holes.



“Indian Left Flank Frays”

The Indian chariots and cavalry redeploying from the Indian right to assist the Indian left approach their destination, but are closely followed by the rapidly moving Coenus. The Indian Central Command, preoccupied with plugging holes and keeping pip-intensive elephants in play, fails to effectively intervene.



“Relief is on the Way – With Coenus in Hot Pursuit”

The embattled Indian Central Command continues to be preoccupied with plugging holes to its front and keeping pip-hungry elephants in play. The low pip Indian command riding to the rescue manages to throw only a single element in Coenus path. This Coenus quickly overwhelms. In short order Coenus will break the rescuing command (already an element down because of the Agrianians), and then continue onward to assist Alexander in breaking the Indian left flank. All then turn on the Indian Center, with predictable results.



“Coenus Strikes Home”

Using DBA 3.0 rules and army lists, and making the same tactical dispositions and decisions Alexander and Porus made at the Battle of the Hydaspes, we arrived at the same results. The game and the battle matched.

Aftermath:

Impressed by Porus' capability and courage, Alexander took him on as a satrap – somewhat expanding his territory as he did so. Intending to advance further into India, Alexander was forestalled by a respectful but determined mutiny of his long serving troops. He returned to Persia by stages, reinforcing the stability of his empire as he did so. He died young of malaria in Babylon in 323 BC. His successors fragmented the empire, but sustained Hellenistic influences throughout it for years to come – even in the distant reaches of India.

Ever since the battle concluded commentators have been alive with “what-ifs”, surmising the consequences if things had happened differently. DBA 3.0 gives us a great opportunity to explore this from a tactical point of view. Indeed, the very day we fought this historical reconstruction to conclusion, we re-deployed the troops in a different fashion and tried it again. The armies are evenly matched. Sometimes Alexander wins, sometimes he loses. Try your hand at this climactic battle!

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Fuller, J.F.C. *The Generalship of Alexander the Great*

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Brought to you by:

Colorado Military Historians John Brown, Terry Shockey, John Mumby, Tony Fryer and Dan Gurule

Bagradas 255 BC

Prelude to Cannae During the 1st Punic War:

“And again Euripides' words, so long recognized as just, that "one wise counsel conquers many hands" were then confirmed by the actual facts. For one man and one brain laid low that host which seemed so invincible and efficient, and restored the fortunes of a state which in the eyes of all was utterly fallen and the deadened spirit of its soldiers.” Diodorus Siculus commenting on Xanthippus' victory



The Historical Background:

Carthage was on a losing streak. What had started as a war to secure dominance over the western Mediterranean was ending in a showdown with another emerging power. Rome would not let Carthage expand uncontested. The island of Sicily had been the battleground.

Sicily was not new to war. Rival Greek factions had settled the strategically located island and fought for centuries. Indigenous peoples still quarreled with the Greek settlers over their previous lands. Armies of mercenaries hired during earlier conflicts had claimed stake and settled parts of the island.

Into this cockpit of conflict crashed the growing spheres of power of the emerging regional states. Although initially allied and ultimately victorious over a common foe, the Greek king Pyrrhus of Epirus, Rome and Carthage were uncomfortable allies. The Epirot invasion had been defeated with difficulty by a

combination of a competent Carthaginian navy and dogged Roman manpower. Carthage, however, lost most of its holdings in Sicily. This allied victory ironically set the stage for the 1st Punic War.

Rome and Carthage were quite different. The Roman Republic had grown from a small city to a regional power utilizing its citizen soldiers. The Roman Legionnaire seemed to have much in common with the Greek hoplite. A land-owning citizen, the legionnaire had a strong interest in the future of his state and was able to equip himself with heavy armor and weapons much like his Greek counterpart. Unlike the Greeks, the Romans had developed a method of fighting better suited to the terrain and enemies of Italy. The Legionnaire relied less on the disciplined closed rank mass of the hoplite phalanx and instead fought in a more open order of small groups called “maniples”. Deployed in a series of three lines the Romans were able to use fresh maniples in the rear lines to relieve exhausted front line troops. This tactic allowed the Romans to exert sustained combat power over a considerable period of time and, unlike the hoplite phalanx, in rough terrain. Though arguably less steady than the phalanx against mounted enemies, the Roman manipular infantry formations would usually outlast their more traditionally organized opponents.

Carthage was a sea power and its small land forces were based on the hoplite model. Though made rich by its trading empire, Carthage lacked the manpower resources of Rome. To make up for this the Carthaginians employed large numbers of mercenaries. Spanish tribesmen, Gauls, Numidians, and Greek mercenaries buttressed the city’s core hoplite forces. Thus in a war between the powers, the Roman citizen soldier would face off against the hired mercenary forces of Carthage.

The clash had gone badly for Carthage. Launching an invasion of Sicily to restore its previous holdings, Carthage was quickly thwarted by the entrance in the theatre of its previous ally, Rome. While ancient sources disagree and are vague on the exact details, the outcome is clear. The Punic forces were pushed out of Sicily was significant loss. The Punic mercenary forces could not stand against the Romans. Several years of sieges against the remaining Punic strongholds were to follow. During this time, the main actions of the war shifted to the sea. Carthaginian naval superiority was challenged by a newly built Roman navy. Victorious in several major naval engagements, the Romans felt confident in launching an attack on the Carthaginian mainland.

The Roman consul Marcus Atilius Regulus debarked in North Africa with a standard consular army composed of 2 Legions with a large number of Italian allies. With forces totaling 15,000 foot and perhaps up to 1,000 mounted (less than ½ the usual mounted forces as the Romans had a difficult time with horse transport across the Mediterranean) he set out immediately to secure the Roman base and defeat the Carthaginian field forces. Carthage having experienced trouble standing up to the Roman legionnaire in the open attempted to force an engagement in the high rough ground outside the Punic capital. They were not successful as the tough legionnaires were well acquainted with fighting in rough terrain from their days of fighting in the hills of Italy. The Carthaginians again suffered defeat.

With their navy beaten and army unable to stand against the Roman Legions, the Carthaginians were close to despair. Their salvation came from an almost mythological source. A Spartan mercenary commander named Xanthippus, answered Carthage’s call for help. Arriving like some Homeric hero, Xanthippus took control of the Punic army and restored order and morale.

Seeing the paucity of Roman mounted forces and noting the Carthaginian investment in a large corps of elephants, Xanthippus encouraged the Punic commanders to change strategy and confront the campaigning Roman forces in the open field.

Fighting the Battle:

The ancient historian Polybius reports that Roman commander Marcus Attilius Regulus invaded North Africa with 15,000 men. The number of mounted troops available was limited to about 1000 by the difficulties of transport across the Mediterranean. While an exact organization is not available to us, the numbers and configuration work out as a standard Consular army of two Legions plus another army of allies. Though Regulus' co-commander (consular armies usually being commanded by two consuls) had returned to Rome, it seems best to split the Romans into two large tough but somewhat inflexible commands mirroring the actual command structure. At the standard historical DBA scale of 500 men per foot element and 250 per mounted the Roman army is organized as follows...

Order of Battle:

The Roman Army: II/33

1st Legion and Allies- Break Point of 7 elements:

- 2x Roman Ps (the light infantry)
- 3x Roman Hastati 4Bd (the front line)
- 3x Roman Principes 4Bd (the second line- one being Regulus as a 4Bd Gen)
- 2x Roman Triarii Sp (the third line)
- 1x Allied Ps (deployed with the light infantry)
- 2x Italiot Allies 4Ax (deployed with the Hastati)
- 1x Italiot Allies 4Ax (deployed with the Principes)
- 1x Italiot Hoplites Sp (deployed with the Triarii)
- 2x Cv (Roman and Allied Cavalry)

2nd Legion and Allies- Break Point of 7 elements:

- 2x Roman Ps (the light infantry)
- 3x Roman Hastati 4Bd (the front line)
- 3x Roman Principes 4Bd (the second line- one being a 4Bd Gen)
- 2x Roman Triarii Sp (the third line)
- 1x Allied Ps (deployed with the light infantry)
- 2x Italiot Allies 4Ax (deployed with the Hastati)
- 1x Italiot Allies 4Ax (deployed with the Principes)
- 1x Italiot Hoplites Sp (deployed with the Triarii)
- 2x Cv (Roman and Allied Cavalry)

The Carthaginian army was primarily made of mercenaries with a hard core of citizen hoplites. Prone to fads and varying widely with the quality of their commanders, the Carthaginian military had reached a low point by the end of the 1st Punic war. Having abandoned their archaic chariot forces, the Carthaginians raised significant forces of cavalry. They also had purchased a huge number of war elephants.

Xanthippus whipped the Carthaginian citizen hoplites into shape and instilled a new confidence. Carthage had followed a failed strategy of fighting the Romans in rough terrain in hopes that their light infantry could defeat the legionaries. Xanthippus, recognizing the Punic superiority in mounted forces, convinced the Carthaginian rulers to abandon this strategy and instead meet the Romans in open battle. Polybius reports the Punic army to consist of 12,000 foot, 4,000 mounted, and well over 100 war elephants. This works well in historical battle DBA as two standard "Later Carthaginian" armies and one "Hellenic Greek" army representing Xanthippus' mercenaries, reinforced by a large elephant corps. The army was split into three wings modeled to scale as follows...

The Game:

Marcus Regulus was certainly surprised the Carthaginians moved against him in open battle. Adopting the traditional Triplex Acies, the Roman Commander ordered his skirmishers to move directly in front of the Carthaginian Elephants. Knowing that he was heavily outnumbered by enemy cavalry, Regulus moved his Italian allies to oppose the enemy Cavalry and protect his flanks.



The Carthaginians arrayed themselves with their elephants in front to charge the Roman line. Carthaginian hoplite heavy infantry followed closely behind the elephants... but not too closely! Xanthippus, the CinC, commanded the right flank (low dice command) that consisted of mainly mercenary Greek hoplites and cavalry, while Hasdrubal took his rightful place in the center with the Carthaginian citizen hoplites of the center command (medium dice command). Finally, Himilco commanded the Carthaginian left (high dice command) with most of the Gaulic and Spanish allies... both mounted and foot.



Following their pre-battle plan the Carthaginians closed on the flanks... but most of their energy was focused on attacking with the elephants in their center.



The Roman battle lines adjusted to meet the Carthaginian threat as the hot North African sun beat down...



Poor pip rolls for the Romans showed that even with their well organized command system (they may apportion their pip die at will in this scenario) the Carthaginian sudden aggressiveness caught them off guard and slowed their response.

Regulus worried about his flanks and used most of his effort moving the Roman skirmishers to counter the Cathaginian elephants, aligning his Italian Allies to support his own meager cavalry forces on the flanks and preparing his legionnaires for the elephants attacking his center.

Xanthippus opted for a general advance, using most of his time (he was the low pip command) sending messages to Himilco and Hasdrupal to keep them moving...

The Elephants close...



The Roman light infantry gave a mighty cheer and the first elephants died from a strong javelin barrage by the Roman Velites. The initial clash went better than Regulus had anticipated. The Cathaginian elephants suffered casualties and in some places were retreating. The Roman left slowly maneuvered into a defensive position aided by the strange lethargy of the famed Spartan general Xanthippus.

The Roman right flank however experienced more mixed results. Himilco had closed quickly and strongly against the Roman battle line. The Italian Allies armed with javelins and some with longer spears threw back the Spanish cavalry with casualties. The Roman cavalry however had more difficulty further to the flank and suffered casualties fighting against the Carthaginian nobles.



The Carthaginians were unrelenting in the center. Xanthippus knew that if he could keep the Roman infantry occupied with elephants, then his cavalry could defeat the Roman flanks and spare the Greek mercenary and Carthaginian hoplites from meeting the full grinding force of the Roman legion. Sending a constant stream of messages to Hasdrubal, Xanthippus urged him to keep pressing the elephants forward and ignore all losses. The tactic started to play out as the Romans were beginning to be pushed back to their camp.



The Roman Velites, despite their initial success, were despairing of stopping the now enraged elephants. Exhausted both in spirit and ammunition, they fell back through the Roman Hastati and Princepi. Fresh Roman heavy infantry took up the fight and in some cases drove the massed elephants back. The success was short lived as Hasdrubal ordered his elephant drivers to push forward. The Roman infantry was in danger of being crushed against their own camp.

Dismayed by the heavy elephant casualties yet bolstered by retreating Roman lines the hoplites pressed forward to come to grips with the Roman heavy infantry. Xanthippus' training gave them confidence that they could engage and best the Roman legion. Disaster struck as the elephants were driven forward relentlessly. The Carthaginian hoplites followed too closely.

Then suddenly, the elephants fled... running over both Roman legionnaires and Carthaginian hoplites in their mad rush to the rear. The Roman right legion and the Carthaginian center reached exhaustion and broke from the rampaging elephants at the same time!



The Roman left sensing that their right flank was in danger desperately engaged Xanthippus' forces. Tough Greek mercenaries and their serried ranks were a stubborn match for the legionaries. The Roman system had the upper hand, but the mercenaries were difficult to wear down.



While the Roman left was trying to salvage the battle, Regulus made a desperate bid to hold the Carthaginian left with his broken Legion. Making several amazing pip rolls, he held the Romans in place against an onslaught from Himilco's relatively fresh forces as the remaining elephants of the Carthaginian center milled about in confusion and rage.





All was for naught as Regulus' command was destroyed piecemeal. The remaining Roman legion pressed ahead vigorously trying to either rout or break free from Xanthippus' Greek mercenaries. Time however ran out as the Romans reached their 50% breakpoint and their army was destroyed.

Aftermath:

This battle turned out somewhat differently than the historical outcome of the 1st Punic War battle. In the actual battle, though thoroughly defeated, the Romans were able to break Xanthippus' command and escape with part of the left legion. Here we saw the Carthaginian center command broken, probably due to the Carthaginian commander's over aggressive use of elephants. The Romans were unable to break either Carthaginian flank command.

What is certain is that in all six play tests of this battle the Carthaginians won. Though some games were close, the lack of Roman cavalry was always the deciding factor. The Italian allies and Roman second lines have the combat power to hold the Carthaginian cavalry for long period of time. What the Romans lack is the speed to counter Carthaginian moves. The Romans are forced to spend too many pips maneuvering their slower forces to match the Carthaginian flanking moves. This prevents them from being aggressive enough to engage the remaining Carthaginian forces with their superior infantry to win.

For game balance I would suggest adding back to Regulus his missing legionary cavalry forces left behind due to lack of transport. Further, I would suggest adding two stands of local Numidian Allied LH. This would add one Cv and one Lh element to each command. Move the Roman breakpoint up to 8 elements per command and Regulus may have a fighting chance.

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CANNAE – 2ND AUGUST 216 BC

HANNIBAL'S HIGH WATER MARK

"...the army marched its way to Cannae, to make it famous in history as the scene of a catastrophic Roman defeat. Destiny itself was at its heels"

Titus Livius ("Livy") History of Rome, Book XXII, ch 43
(Aubrey de Selincort's translation)



Caius Terentius Varro, Consul of Rome & the man most responsible for Hannibal's victory. Allegedly.

The Historical Background:

By 216BC the Second Punic War has been going a couple of years. Hannibal has crossed the Alps and won two major victories in Italy, - The Trebia (218BC) and Lake Trasimene (217BC). The latter battle leads to the Romans adopting the famous Fabian tactics, with the aim of dealing with Hannibal by not actually fighting him. (For those of you not familiar with this period, Quintus Fabius Maximus was appointed Dictator following the disaster at Lake Trasimene. He spent a year tracking Hannibal's army, preventing him from resting and re-supplying properly. He was resolved not to present Hannibal with another opportunity to defeat a full Roman army in open battle.)

After 12 months of not fighting, the Roman Senate decides it is time to put a stop to Hannibal wandering around their back yard at will and raises two large consular armies to deal with him. These march on Hannibal's forces which are south of Rome, having wintered in Gerunium. When Hannibal finally breaks camp he moves even-further south until he arrives at Cannae, a ruined stronghold and Roman supply depot, which he promptly seizes. Here he waits for the Romans to arrive, possibly for several weeks.

The traditional account of how the battle develops is that one consul, Caius Terentius Varro, was more keen to fight than the other, Lucius Aemilius Paullus. The former engages Hannibal without consulting his colleague, finessing him into taking part in a battle following a major disagreement between them.

In practice this is probably a whitewash of the more influential Consul and a political attempt to put all of the blame on Varro, who was regarded as a nouveau riche, and didn't even have the decency to die in the battle.

What we do know is that the armies were sent to fight Hannibal, and not to continue with Fabian tactics. The Consuls chose the battlefield with an eye to reducing the effectiveness of Hannibal's cavalry by cramping the Carthaginian left wing against the river.

Hannibal, meantime, was ready to put into action his plan to encircle the Roman army completely and destroy it utterly. This was to be his decisive victory leading ultimately to the defeat of Rome.

Fighting the Battle:

Of the primary sources, we have only Polybius' History is truly contemporary. His account is clearly used by the later historian, Livy, to provide most of the military details for the battle in his account. Fortunately, except in respect of his patron and his family members, Polybius appears to be a scrupulous historian and he has most of the sort of detail wargamers need (even down to costume colours).

The biggest issue facing any re-fight of Cannae is the disparity in the numbers. The final victors are heavily outnumbered, and to most wargamers' eyes have the weaker troop types. This is a Hannibal army without elephants. This issue is discussed at greater length below in the Order of Battle section.

Cannae is the triumph at the very least of a very experienced commander at the height of his powers over two relative amateurs. A more extreme view would be that it is the crowning achievement of a tactical genius. Whatever view is taken Cannae has some clear narrative markers that make the battle identifiable as Cannae. These are the attempt by the Romans to smash the Carthaginian centre whilst holding off the cavalry, and most importantly Hannibal's planned double envelopment of his opponents. If any of these elements are missing the battle ceases to be Cannae and just becomes a Romans v Carthaginian pick-up game. Special rules have been added to push players down this path. Of course there is no reason not to ignore these if a series of "what if games" are also played.

Unfortunately the site of the battlefield is lost to us as the line of the River Aufidus has moved over time. Fortunately we know the battle was fought on a flat plain with the river on the Roman right. As such the exact location is unimportant

Order of Battles:

The numbers for the battle are quite well documented in the two main sources, Polybius and Livy. The Romans are reported as having 80,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry, with Hannibal having about 40,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry. The orbats use the troop types from the Army List section of DBA3.0 (II/32 & II/33a respectively). The aim was to stay as close as possible to them, whilst reflecting the nature of the armies at Cannae. The battle presents an initial challenge when determining the forces as the Romans are overwhelmed by a much smaller army. Translated to standard 12 element armies the ratio of actual forces would give 12 Roman elements to 7 or 8 Carthaginian ones. In practice, Hannibal's forces were much more experienced and there is a good case for saying they were more effective in combat. Playtests showed that having armies of a similar number of elements produced the games closest to the historical prototype.

Bearing in mind that Rome fielded two Consular armies it made sense to re-create the Roman forces by using two DBA 12 element armies. In turn that meant using two similar sized armies for Hannibal.

Roman Army: II/33

1st Command: Consul Caius Terentius Varro- Break Point 4

- 1 x Cv General (Varro with Allied/Latin cavalry)
- 1 x Cv Allied/Latin cavalry
- 4 x 4Ax (solid) Allied infantry
- 4 x 4Bd (solid) Roman legionaries
- 2 x Ps Velites

2nd Command: Consul Lucius Aemilius Paullus- Break Point 4

- 1 x Cv General (Paullus with equites)
- 1 x Cv Equites
- 4 x 4Ax (solid) Allied infantry
- 4 x 4Bd (solid) Roman legionaries
- 2 x Ps Velites

The commands are deployed side by side, with Paullus on the right and Varro on the left. There are no Triarii in the army as these had been delegated to guard the camp.

Carthaginian Army: II/32a

1st Command: Hannibal- Break Point 4

- 4 x 4Wb Celts
- 4 x 4Ax (solid) Spanish
- 4x Sp Libyan/Poeni Spearmen
(NB – See special rules for Hannibal as CinC)

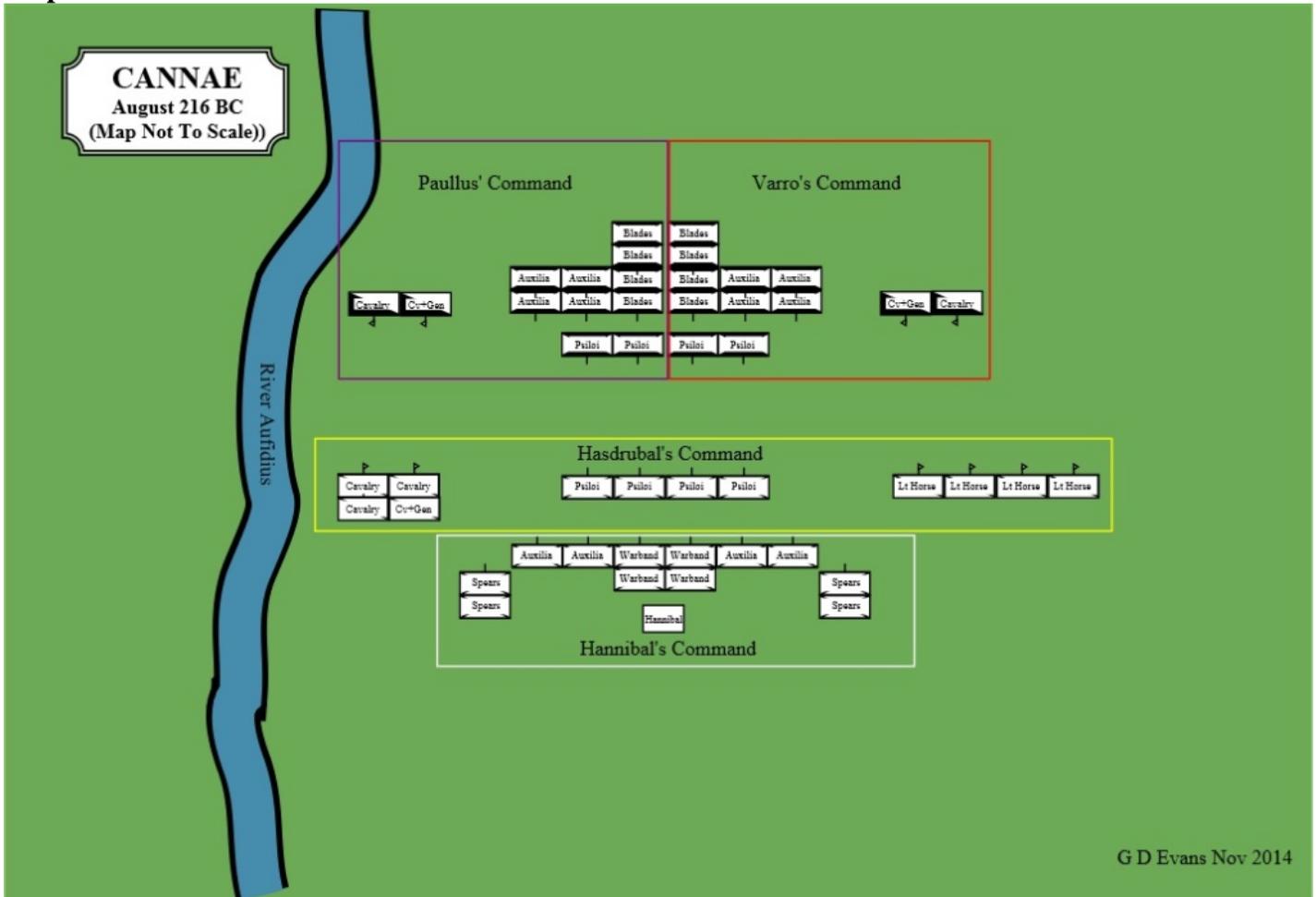
2nd Command: Hasdrubal- Break Point 4

- 1 x Cv General (Hasdrubal)
- 3 x Cv Spanish/Celts
- 4 x LH Numidians
- 4 x Ps Balaeric slingers/Caetrati

The commands are deployed one behind each other, with Hasdrubal in front. The extended 20BW command range for LH in DBA 3.0 makes it possible for Hasdrubal to command the both wings.

Neither side has a camp, as they played no role in the outcome of the battle.

Map of the Battlefield:



When deploying the armies it is important that they are close enough to the river to prevent the right flank Roman cavalry from being outflanked. The central grouping of Roman infantry should also be close enough to the cavalry to prevent the Carthaginian cavalry from attacking the side of the infantry without defeating the Roman cavalry first.

Special Rules:

“Roman plan”

The Roman plan was to smash through the centre of Hannibal’s army. Accordingly, the first PIP of each general must be used to move their portion of the central heavy infantry block a full move forwards towards the Carthaginian infantry line. This restriction is lifted the turn after contact of the front lines. NB The velites do not stop this movement. If there are not enough PIPs to get them out of the way they will be pushed forwards.

“Hannibal’s genius”

(a) Hannibal rolls both PIP dice and adds the two together. These can be allocated to either him or Hasdrubal as he sees fit, subject to neither having more than 6 PIPs per turn.

(b) Hannibal is represented by a standalone figure not attached to an element at the start of the game. He may move and attach himself to ANY element within 4BW for the expenditure of 1 PIP. He may also disengage for the same cost. If contacted by a Roman element whilst not attached he has a free move of 4BW.

“Paullus is alive” Paullus was wounded in the early stages of the battle, but after his wing collapsed he retreated to the middle of the battle and fought with the infantry. If Paullus dies he moves to the nearest infantry base on the roll of a 4,5,6.

“Winning” The game is won by destroying 8 enemy elements and also killing more elements than the opponent. Command demoralisation rules do not apply.

The Game:

Hannibal took the first move and didn't like the look of his right wing, fearing that his Numidians would come to grief against Varro's heavier cavalry. He gave orders to Hasdrubal to advance elsewhere, pushing forward his strong left wing cavalry and the screen of psiloi, whilst holding back his centre.



The Romans were clearly surprised by this gambit and threw a double 1 for their PIPs. (“*Ouch!*” – Ed). Applying the “Roman Plan” rule meant that all they could do was push forward the centre. This was of little concern as it meant that the Velites could contact the Carthaginian psiloi and see them off.

Or not. Four combats, four loses saw two velites elements in the dead pile and two recoiled behind the advancing legions (“*Double Ouch!!*” – Ed). Not an auspicious start in the middle.

However it looked like the Carthaginians had shot their high rolling dice bolt as their left wing cavalry was immediately reduced to half strength. Consul Paullus could hardly believe his luck.



Buoyed up by this success the Roman centre piled into the Carthaginian line. Both Generals knew this would be where the battle would be decided. Hannibal's decision to hold back his Numidians was making life easier for the Romans, as no PIPs had to be expended fending off any outflanking manoeuvre on their left.

The centre was hard grinding on both sides. The blades had a slight edge in the centre, but a couple of lucky rolls by the warbands gave some quick kills. The changes in DBA 3.0 to allow warband to fight effectively in depth without the fear of a double loss and the blade follow up rule has made the Legionary/Celtic Warrior match up much more tense.

The failure of Hasdrubal to get any traction on his wing enabled the Romans to hold off the envelopment of their right flank. On their left Hasdrubal finally moved up his Numidians to provide cover for the African spears to turn the flank of the legions and at least close one side of the pocket. At this point the game was very close as both sides were losing elements at the same rate. Hasdrubal, however, was personally having a really bad day.



By this stage of the battle, Hasdrubal has lost another element of his elite cavalry and Paullus has him where he wants him. On the left of the Roman line the Latin Allies have beaten off their Spanish foes and so can turn to face the African spears. The pocket is closing, but not with a resounding crash.

This final picture shows the position just before Hannibal's last move.



Hasdrubal has succumbed to the Equites, who have moved up and seen off two elements of psiloi who had rushed up to hold the flank. Varro is an element down and in danger of being overwhelmed by the Numidians. The scores at this point stand at seven elements a piece.

Hannibal throws low on his PIPs, (double one) but it doesn't matter as all he wants to do is close with the spears on the Roman left flank. These duly drive off the velites and using the overlap and Spear +1 modifier kill the leading Latin Allied Auxilia element, taking his total to eight. The battle now hangs on what happens in the centre.

Hannibal's "expendable" infantry do him proud, clinging on with the odd recoil but not losing an element. The turn ends 8:7 in favour of Hannibal, and a Carthaginian victory, albeit slightly less emphatic than his historical predecessor.

Aftermath

The scenario has been played through several times, and this was the closest game. The main reason the game was so close was Hannibal's failure to use his Numidians early on, even though he had spare PIPs. This enabled the Romans to focus their PIPs where needed in the middle of the battle and on the right. The scenario is drafted to show how influential Hannibal was and how limiting Roman tactics were. As such it achieves its aims. The Romans can win, but they have to be very lucky, or the Hannibal player has to make a series of mistakes or fail to exploit his advantages. A Roman player who is within two elements of Hannibal's score at the end of the game can congratulate himself that he has done better than his historical predecessors.

If the "Hannibal's Genius" and "Roman plan" rules are ignored it becomes a more balanced scenario, with the Romans probably favourites. Allowing a free deployment tips the scenario even further in their favour and makes it a really tough ask for Hannibal. However, by that point as stated above the game ceases to be a reflight of Cannae. Pushing the Carthaginian victory target to 10 elements evens things up quite a bit as well.

Cannae is the high point of Hannibal's tactical achievements, destroying two Roman armies. Yet it was all to no avail. Without the will or a siege train with which to attack Rome he was forever fated to roam Italy until the Romans worked out how to beat him. To that extent Cannae solved nothing

Sources

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Adrian Goldsworthy – Roman Warfare

Adrian Goldsworthy – Cannae

Peter Connolly – Greece & Rome at War

Duncan Head – Armies of the Macedonian & Punic Wars

The Revolt of Spartacus in the 3rd Servile War 71BC

I am Spartacus!

From the movie "Spartacus" by Stanley Kubrick



The Historical Background:

Spartacus must be one of the most famous revolutionaries in history with his story recounted in a cinematic version with Kirk Douglas in the title role, a made for TV movie, and the multi-year TV series following his career from gladiator to liberator of the slaves. It is probably the case that Spartacus is better known than the Roman general Marcus Licinius Crassus, against whom he led his rebel army. Crassus took command of the Romans against Spartacus because the better generals were fighting elsewhere and he offered to equip, train and lead an army to crush the revolt. While having more of a reputation for being the richest man in Rome than being a general, he did prove up to the task, especially after restoring the punishment of decimation (killing one in ten) for a retreating Legion. He later became a member of the First Triumvirate with Pompey (who joined in the final battle against the slaves) and Julius Caesar, finally meeting his death leading an expedition against Parthia.

Spartacus originally took his rebel army north into Cisalpine Gaul but for unknown reasons returned to the south of Italy. This game begins after he has marched from the Alps to the toe of the Italian boot in Bruttium. He planned to ferry some of his army over to Sicily and paid the Cilician pirates to help him cross. The pirates however took the loot and rowed away leaving the Slave Army stranded. The Roman army meanwhile under Marcus Licinius Crassus built a line of intermittent fortifications, moat and stockade, across the isthmus near Rhegium walling off the Slave Army to starve. In a snow storm the slaves attacked and broke through the fortifications. Spartacus reformed his army and later met the Romans at the Battle of the Siler River. This game allows one to play the breakout from Rhegium. The snowy weather is ignored as it had no impact on the battle.

Fighting the Battle:

When most people think of DBA they typically envision the tournament version: 12 elements lined up against another army on a square battlefield with terrain placed by one player. This might well be called the basic game.

Over the years, players have developed many other styles of the game; some based on historical battles, battle problems, or what-if scenarios. What we present here is a what-if game that is also a battle problem. The terrain features are fixed and the elements have a little flexibility in deployment. The game is played to the official winning conditions with a few minor changes.

During the past year we developed this scenario while playing a series of battles between the Marian Romans and their historical opponents. These were mostly based on historical battles or matched pairs of historical enemies.

Order of Battle:

The game shown here uses just 12 elements per side as given in the DBA 3 Book, page 68 for Spartacus, II/45c. See the background of the army there. The Marian army is on page 69, II/49. The troops used are shown below.

Here is a list of the specific elements in the battle... just what was involved, not the full lists. Other options are shown in Brackets [] Bob controlled the Romans, Charlie has the Slave Army.

II/49 Marian Roman Army 105 BC - 25 BC

1 x General (Cv) [or Bd, but Bob thought Crassus would prefer mounted]

1 x Spanish auxiliary cavalry (Cv) [or Light Horse, but wanted extra strength of the Cavalry]

5 x legionaries (4Bd)

1 x legionaries (4Bd) [could have taken another Bd, but I wanted a 4A.]

1 x Illyrian auxiliary foot (4Ax)

1 x Spanish javelinmen (3Ax) [or Ps, Bob took the Fast Ax as it can move 3 Base Widths in any terrain and is a point better than the Ps in combat]

1 x slingers (Ps),

1 x requisitioned city bolt-shooters (Art) [or El, or 4Wb, or Cv]

II/45 Spartacus' Army in Southern Italy 74 BC- 71BC

1 x General on horseback (Cv) [or Bd]

1 x ex-gladiators or veteran war prisoners with Roman equipment (4Bd),

3 x other ex-slaves with Roman equipment (4Bd),

(There is no difference in the two Blades listed above. The differentiation is just to allow players to put some Gladiators in one element, if they wish)

1 x Gaul ex-slaves fighting in native style (3Wb) [or 4Wb, Charlie took the faster moving option for bad going]

4 x other ex-slaves (5Hd)

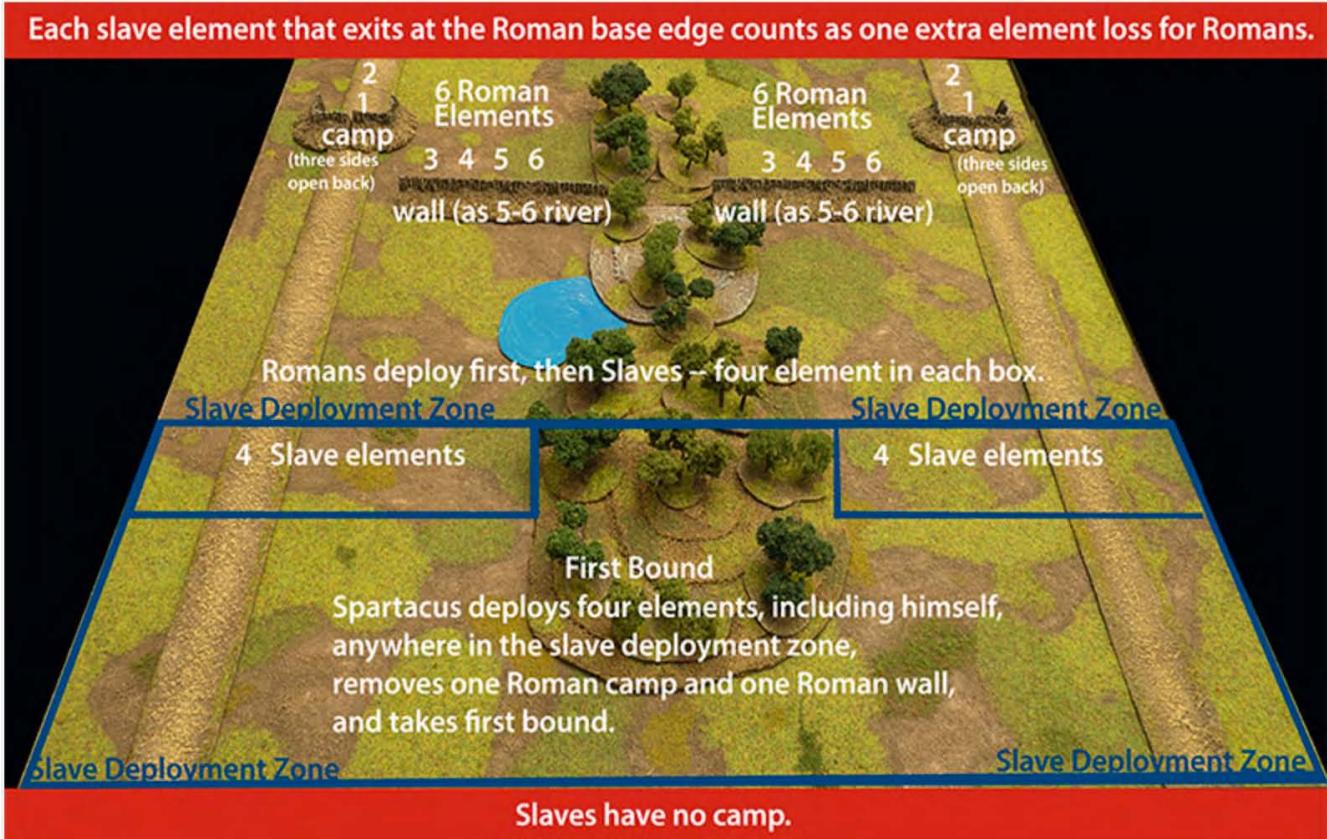
2 x herdsmen and shepherds (Ps).

Special Rules:

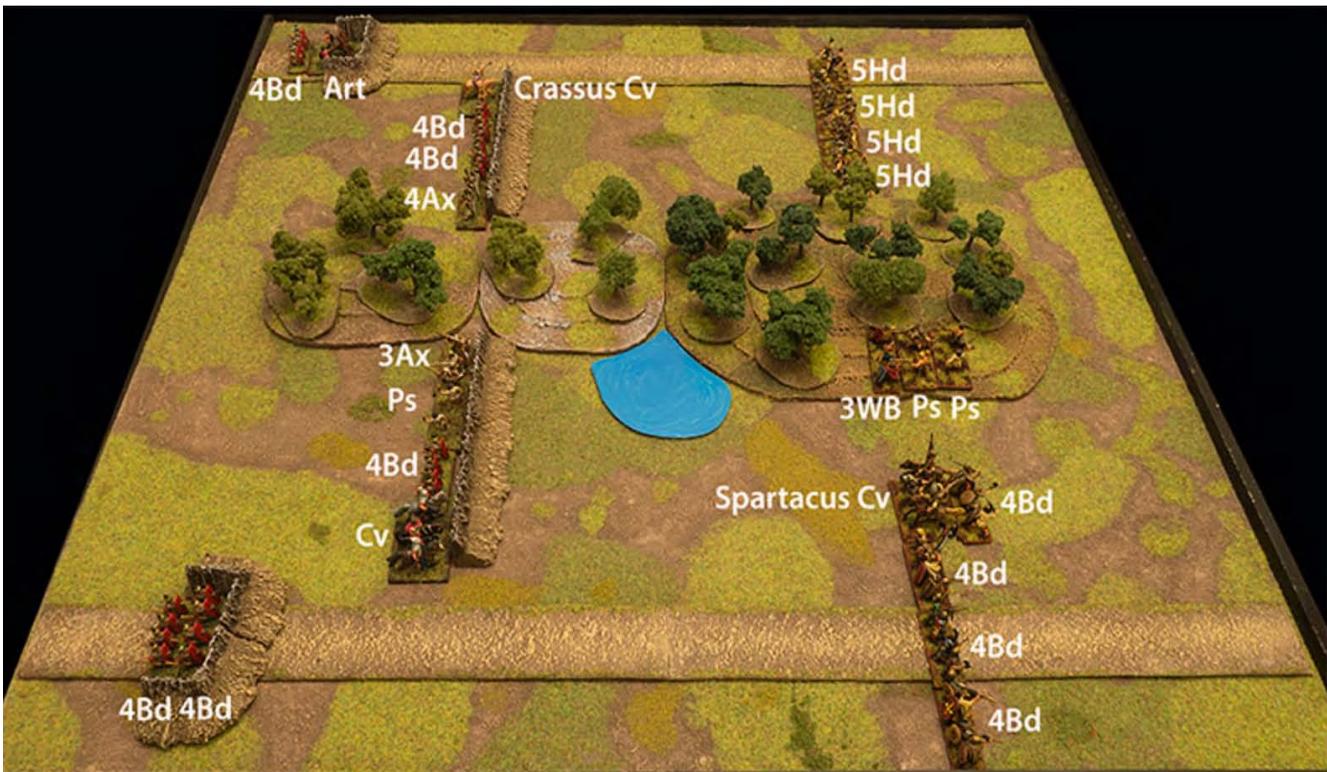
Each of Spartacus' elements exited off the Roman board edge counts as an element loss for the Romans.

The pond terrain is not found in DBA. It is treated as impassible and adds an interesting terrain type to the game. The Slave Army moves first.

The Map:



With deployed troops:



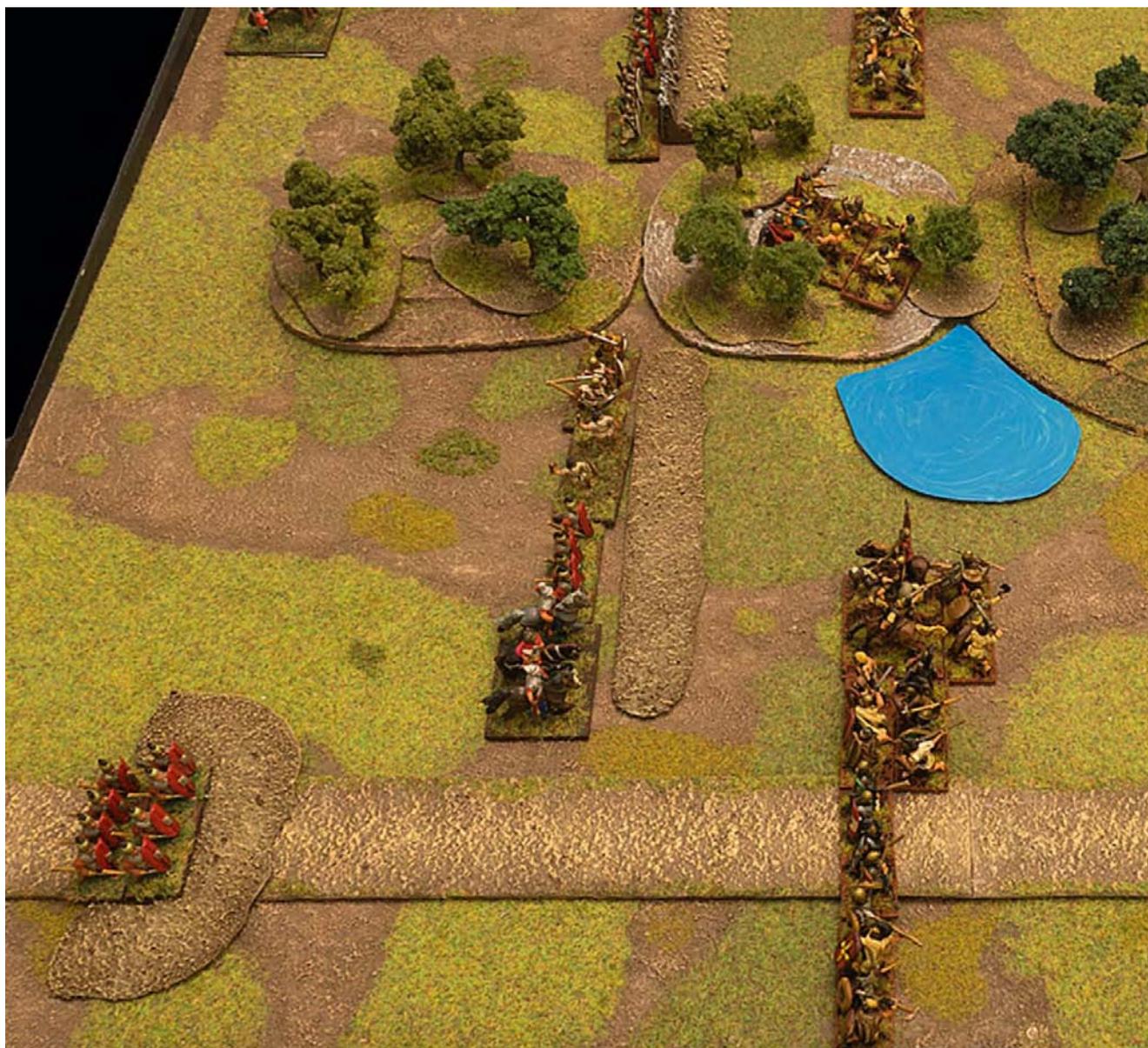
The Game:

On a stormy night as the Romans huddle in their camps, at one section of the palisade, the slaves fill in the ditch and pull down the stake wall. At dawn they will attempt to breakout.

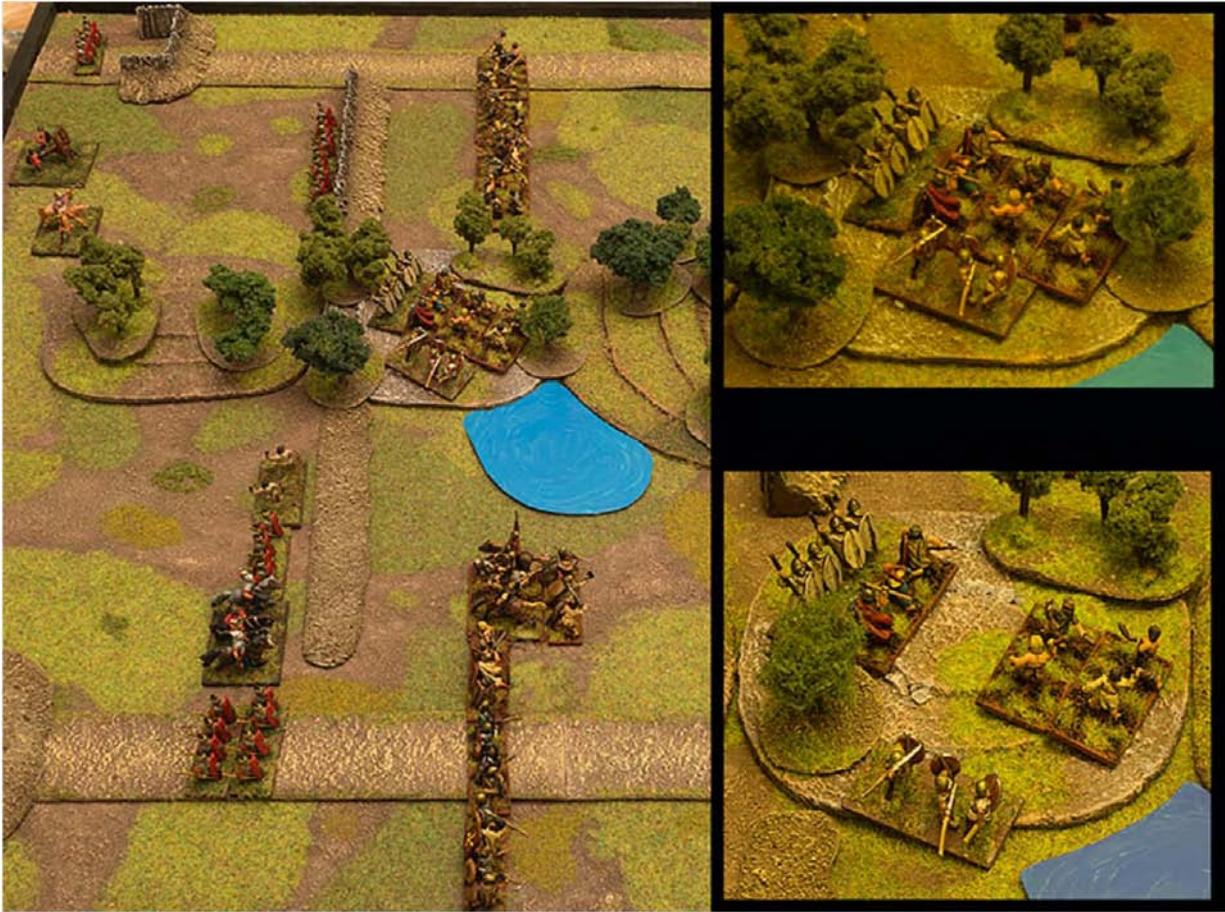


Spartacus removes the wall and camp on the Roman right. He will attempt to breakout there while his Hordes pressure the Roman left and occupy the troops there.

In DBA 3, Hordes don't count toward losing the game, so attacking them does little good. They however cannot be ignored as they can be tough opponents and might exit the board triggering the special rule for this battle that counts each exited as a Roman loss. They also will tie down much of the Roman army.



Spartacus advances on both flanks as the slave fast Warband and Psiloi infiltrate the Roman center. Desperate to both move reinforcements to his right and to stop the infiltration of his center, Crassus has command problems (low pips).



Regaining control (6 pips) Crassus orders 2 cohorts (Blade) to reinforce his right while his Auxilia attack and flank the Slave column in the wooded center. This is a crucial fight early in the game. A Roman win will eliminate 3 elements, and the center threat. Note that all three slave elements are contacted by the fast Auxilia on the flank. The following rule will come into effect.

“An element that has an enemy front edge in contact with its side or rear edge is destroyed by recoiling, being pushed back, fleeing or being in a column whose front element is destroyed”

Flanked but uphill, the Gauls win, and force the Romans back down the slope. As I write this report, I notice two mistakes we made in the outcome of this combat. This is a report of a game played in 2014 so we cannot go back to re-do it. Take this as a problem to solve. What were the two mistakes? The answer is at the end of the chapter.

On the Roman right, Crassus racing around the woods forms his line of battle and the two armies, mostly Blades and Cavalry, clash. At the top, in the woods fight, the Psiloi fall back, out of the threat zone of the Roman fast Auxilia. The fast Warband and the solid Auxilia continue to be engaged.



The forces of Spartacus and Crassus push each other back and forth all along the line on the Roman right flank. The Slave general fights in the front rank.

The action on the Slave right flank continues to be a stand off. The action in the center heats up.



The Gauls (fast Warband), flanked again, continue to survive driving deeper into the center of the Roman line. This time the Slave Psiloi are lagging behind and unable to support the flank of the Gaul Warband.

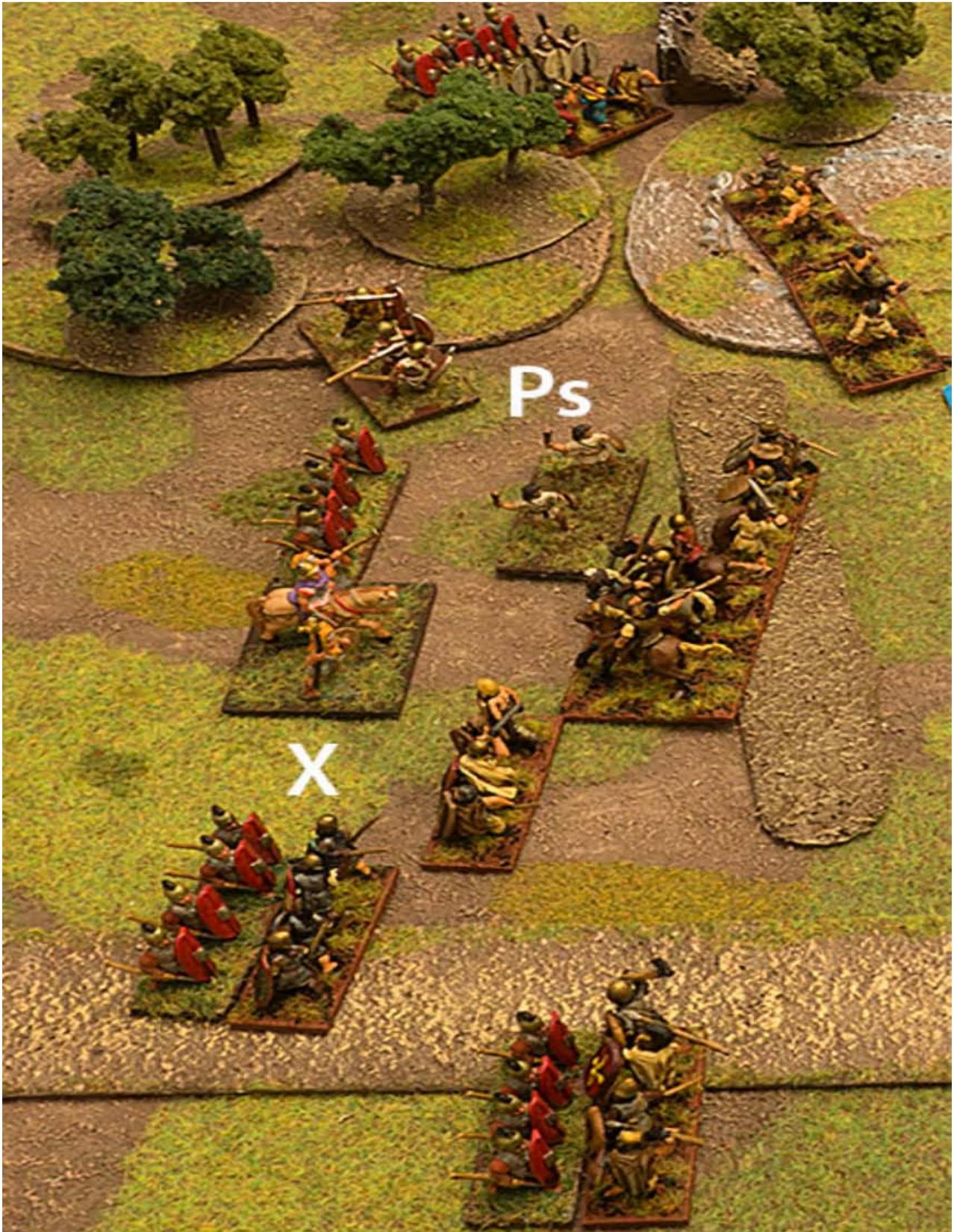
The fast Warband on the hill kept winning by a point or two, and pushing back the solid Auxilia opposing it. The Warband pursued so it stayed in contact for no PIPs. The Psiloi formed up into a line which they can do in Bad Going and threatened the fast Auxilia.



Crassus orders a cohort (Blade) to move back out of the line of battle. In its place, the Roman commander and his bodyguard attack Spartacus. General fights general as both armies hold steady with few casualties (no elements lost).

Crassus brought the Blade element back too far. It was Threat Zoned so had to move back straight for its move. It took too many bounds to get it back, to plug in holes that would develop.

In DBA 3, Blades pursue and cannot destroy other Blade, the max result one on one is 6 to 11. Once Blades get into combat, with no support, as you see the two Blades in bottom picture, they will continue to stay in contact every bound. The Roman Blade "won" a couple of times so pushed the pair too far for support to come and aid either.



The battle lines of both armies began to fragment. A heroic Roman Psiloi holds off an element of Gladiators (Blade) for three consecutive bounds. A unit of Roman Cavalry is destroyed by Slave Blades. There is a gap (marked with an X) in the Roman line. (The Romans have lost one rather crucial element.)



Spartacus charges Crassus as Slave Blades hit the Roman general's flank. Crassus pushes Spartacus back. Spartacus attacks again on his bound and the Roman commander is destroyed. Writers at the time record that Spartacus did attempt to attack Crassus but was held off by his bodyguard. Not here!



The loss of Crassus causes command problems for the struggling Romans (2 pips to move elements). A Roman cohort (Blade) attacks Spartacus in a desperate move to even the battle, but is flanked and destroyed (at X).

Aftermath:

This brings the Roman loses to 4, giving victory to the Slave Army and rewriting history.

Problem Answer: After beating the Roman Auxilia, the Warband pursued. Here is the rule on pursuit:

“An element in a city, fort or camp or in bad going (other than marsh or gully) or whose pursuit move would cross a battlefield edge or enter such bad going, does not pursue. Otherwise an element whose close combat opponents recoil, flee or are destroyed (and all elements in a column behind such an element) must immediately pursue...”

Note “An element in bad going” does not pursue. So the Warband should not have gone after the Auxilia. But if we missed that rule, we should have allowed the whole column behind the Warband to follow the pursuit. Well, we had part of it right!

Sources:

Non-fiction (I use that term loosely because this episode is not all that well documented except by the Romans, who were, after all the winners)

<http://www.livius.org/so-st/spartacus/spartacus.html>

References there to writings by other Romans

Wikipedia article has much information on Spartacus, complete bibliography of all media.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spartacus>

<http://www.historynet.com/spartacus.htm>

From April 1994 issue of *Military History* magazine. Nice summary account of events.

Fiction

Spartacus, Howard Fast (source material for Kubrick's movie Spartacus)

Fortune's Favorites, third historical novel in Colleen McCullough's Masters of Rome series.

This full series is an excellent story of the Roman Republic from Marius, 110BC to triumph of Octavian, 27BC.

CARNUNTUM – 170AD

Disaster on the Danube...

“Into the pools of the Ister, the stream that from Zeus taketh issue,
Hurl, I command you, a pair of Cybele’s faithful attendants,
Beasts that dwell on the mountains, and all that the Indian climate
Yieldeth of flower and herb that is fragrant; amain there shall follow
Victory and great glory, and welcome peace in their footsteps.”

Prophecy attributed to Alexander the Charlatan by Lucian of Samosata (before the defeat)



The Historical Background:

During the winter of 169 AD, the eighth year of his reign as Emperor, Marcus Aurelius laid his co-emperor Lucius Verus to rest. Lucius Verus was not the only victim of the Antonine plague, but this epidemic would severely impact the military as well as the social and economic structure of the empire and last well into the reign of Commodus.

Before Verus’ death, the two were able to stem the barbarian incursions from across the Danube and with the west now in secure hands Marcus Aurelius was able to launch a campaign against Parthia in Mesopotamia. Now alone his foremost concern was to rebuild a depleted army. From his winter headquarters at Sirmium, the emperor made plans to carry the war across the Danube next spring (170 AD). Balomar, king of the Marcomanni had other plans.

Fighting the Battle:

Very little information about the Battle of Carnuntum (170 AD) is to be found among primary sources as Roman disasters are less an appealing topic to write about than Roman victories. Three years before, a Germanic tribal coalition, the Langobardi-Obii, had been beaten while attempting to cross the Danube near modern day Vienna (Vindobona). This event is recorded in the histories and also that King Balomar of the Marcomanni brokered the peace negotiations between the Langobardi-Obii and Rome.

We may surmise also that during these negotiations Balomar had gained sufficient knowledge of the Roman frontier and of the strength of military forces stationed in the region of Pannonia Superior. Like other Roman provinces bordering the Danube River each was governed from an administrative capital and maintained a legionary garrison and for Pannonia Superior that was Carnuntum guarded by the XIV Legion Gemina.

Aside from its strategic military importance on the Danube frontier, Carnuntum is also known as the gateway for the 'Amber Road', a lucrative trade route which stretched from beyond the lands of the Germanic tribes far to the north to the farthest economic centres within the Empire. Goods other than amber were moved along the trade route, and we can imagine that news of the destruction caused by the Antonine plague and the depletion it caused on the military stationed on the frontier also filtered north. This was definitely a time to formulate plans.

In the spring of 170 AD, a new Germanic coalition of Marcomanni and Quadi led by King Balomar crossed the Danube somewhere between Vindobona and Carnuntum, side stepping the lower Alpine Mountains, and moved east. Their first objective would be Carnuntum and the elimination of the weakened Roman forces based there, the XIV Legion, Gemina.

Today there is little archaeological evidence to determine where the battle was fought and less so as to where the crossing of the Danube took place. Between the cities of Carnuntum and Vindobona is a distance of 30 km connected by a Roman road constructed between the heavy forests and the Danube River. Even at a crossing half way between Vindobona and Carnuntum an army such as the Marcomanni and Quadi would possibly take two days to reach Carnuntum. Whether the signal towers bordering the Danube were silenced or the Roman troops were lax in their duty, we can only speculate as historically, the Battle of Carnuntum ended in disaster for Rome.

Order of Battle:

The Romans (II/56 Early Imperial Roman)

With a scant reference to Roman strength we know the XIV Gemina were present as were the auxilia located in the area. Given the rapidity of the crossing and the march on Carnuntum, vexillations of the I Adiutrix (Brigetio) and the II Adiutrix (Aquincum) would most likely not reach the capitol in time.

Governor Marco Iallio Basso Fabio Valeriano alerted to the approach of the Marcomanni and Quadi would not have known the fate of Vindobona, so gathering all the auxilia and Urban cohorts to Carnuntum may have at best 10,000 troops including the legion. Using the DBA 3.0 guide for historical representation this gives the Roman player about 24 elements.

The composition below takes into account a detachment of contarii (Kn) from Savaria and the 3Bd representing the gladiators present at the school at Carnuntum for battlefield three.

Roman Army (defender)
2 x Generals (Cv),
2 x Equites (Cv),
8 x Legionaries (Bd),
6 x Auxilia (4Ax),
1 x Equites (Cv),
2 x Urban Cohors (4Ax),
1 x Slings (Ps),
1 x Lancers (3Kn),
1 x Bolt Shooter (Art) = 24 elements.

Note: Roman players are free to adjust the composition of the two commands with the proviso that the smallest command may not have less than six elements. For battlefield three replace one auxilia with 1 x Gladiators (3Bd). Bringing two barbarian commands to a state of demoralization or half of the total army's elements would be considered a Roman victory.

The Marcomanni and Quadi (Early German II/47g)

King Ballomar of the Marcomanni should be classed as a shrewd commander. Having negotiated a peace settlement between Rome and the Langobardi in 167 AD, he would also have good knowledge about the region and Rome's military strength. He was aware of the failed attempt by the Langobardi-Obii was due to small numbers and so would take the time to gather sufficient numbers to make his invasion successful.

Rather than assault Carnuntum from a point directly across the Danube, he chose to launch his invasion at a point between the two major legion camps. Selecting Carnuntum not only for its economic importance would send a panic throughout the region and open the Amber Road for plunder.

The German Army (invader)
Marcomanni (II/47g)
2 x Generals (Cv),
4 x Cavalry (Cv),
16 x Warriors (4Wb),
2 x Skirmisher (Ps) = 24 elements.

Quadi Ally. (II/47g)
1 x General (Cv),
1 x Cavalry (Cv),
8 x Warriors (4Wb),
2 x Skirmisher (Ps) = 12 elements.

Note: The Marcomanni have two commands totalling 24 elements plus an ally of 12. The German player may choose to adjust the composition of his two Marcomanni commands keeping in mind the minimum needed for the smallest command; the Quadi must remain unchanged. A German victory is reached when both Roman commands are demoralized or 50% of the army's total elements are lost.

Special Rules:

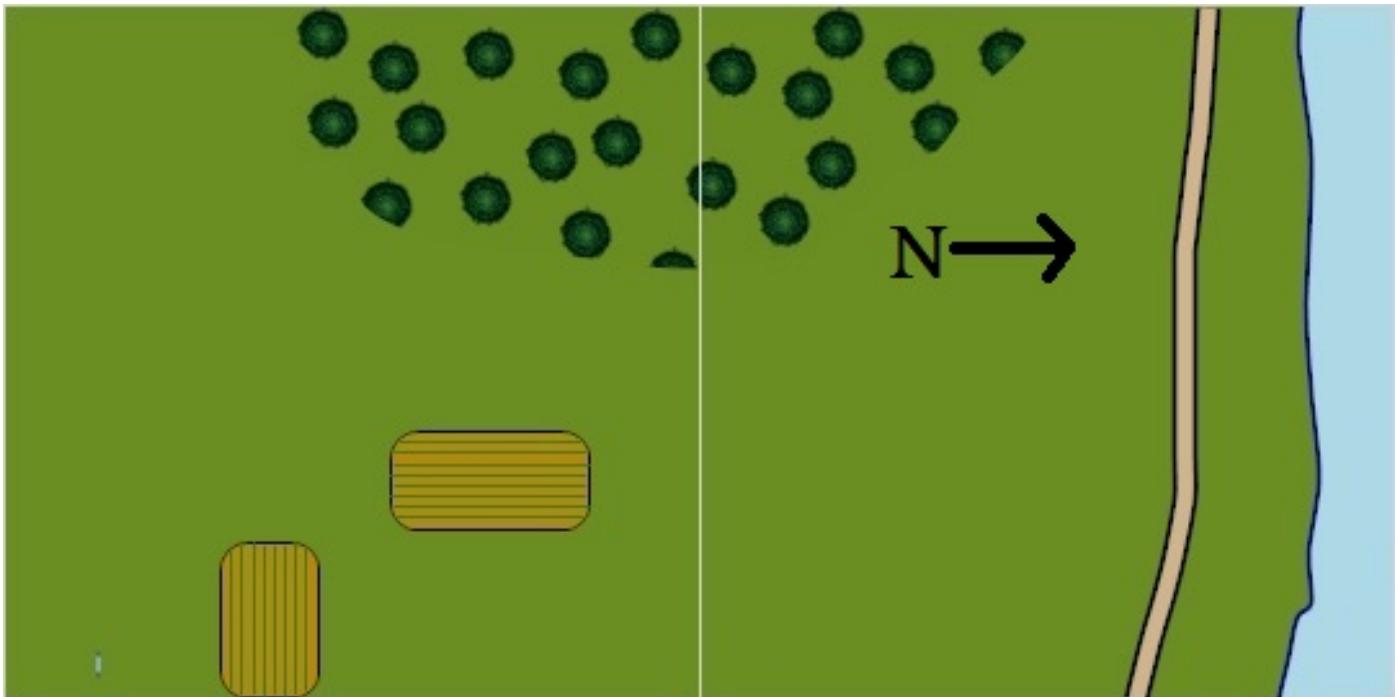
Note for any of the three battlefields, Rome as defender casting a score of 5 or less on his first throw all fields change to rough going (plough) and will impede movement.

Reviewing maps, satellite photos and descriptions of the region there are a number of possible locations where the Battle of Carnuntum could have taken place. Rather than select one, this scenario gives players the option to use any of the three.

Battlefield One.

Since the days of Augustus, Carnuntum grew from a military post and later became the administrative centre of Pannonia Superior with a population reaching 50,000. The woods surrounding Carnuntum made room for fields, a growing population and an urban expansion.

Further to the west, there is a point where the terrain narrows between the Danube and the Rohrauer Forest; an ideal location for battle as this would constrict barbarian maneuver and minimize the numerical advantage held by Balomar. This is approximately 6 km. from Carnuntum but would require ample warning from watch towers for Roman troops to reach.



On the map (one) do note the Rohrauer forest cuts the barbarian deployment area into two zones, one near the Danube for the main body and a second one south of the Rohrauer forest for a mobile column. The ground opens to a plain where a sparse number of farms and fields break up the Roman deployment area.

This is offered as an option, assuming a timely warning from scouts and watch towers, the Roman commander could assemble a large enough force to confront Balomar. For the Roman player, this field would offer a good chance to negate the superior numbers of the Marcomanni and Quadi.

Battlefield Two.

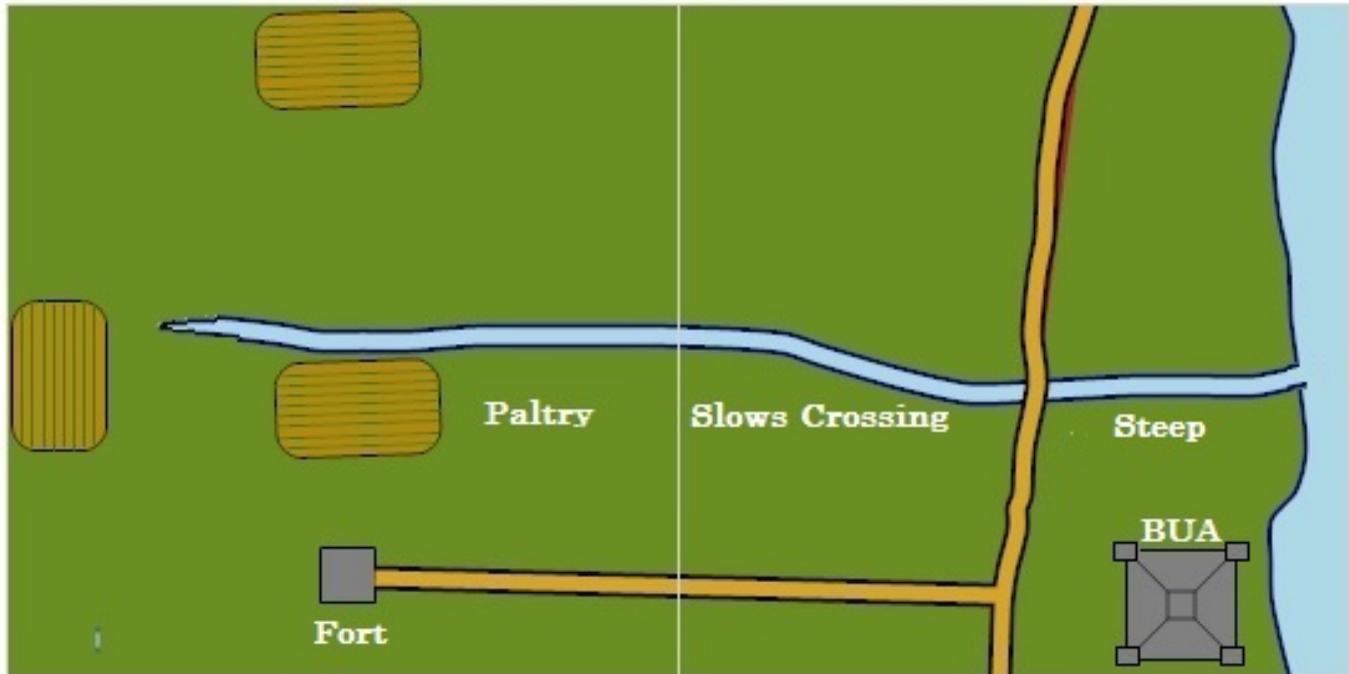
This battlefield is located about three kilometers from city of Carnuntum. More fields and farms would dot the landscape and small tributaries leading into the Danube would score the land. It is quite possible Roman forces took up a position behind one such tributary to meet the barbarians.



For game purposes, the river which begins near board centre courses its way across the front of the Roman deployment area and empties into the Danube River. Casting a die to determine the difficulty of crossing is not necessary as the total length of the stream is divided into three segments, each segment increasing in difficulty as it nears the Danube. Near board centre, the river is deemed paltry, a second section will slow movement and a third section north of the Roman road descends 20 meters to empty into the Danube giving a Roman defender the advantage of its banks

Battlefield Three.

This last option is outside the city walls of Carnuntum and offers the Roman player a number of additional features. This tributary has similar characteristics to the one offered in battlefield two, in addition there are more fields and farms, a Gladiator school which has the attributes of a fort, the suburbs of Carnuntum located at the Roman base edge and in the corner a wall section of Civilis Carnuntum.



The Gladiator school is no larger than 2 x 3BW and is garrisoned by gladiators (3Bd) at the start of the game. The Civilis Carnuntum is actually the administrative centre and as a BUA is classed as a city. Its two gates are located north and south of each other; the northern gate leads to the docks and customs area while the southern gate opens to the Roman road. Denizens occupying the Civilis should be modelled as bean counters destroying incriminating records, servants hauling secreted treasure to awaiting transport or unemployed musicians singing Carnuntum's swan song.

Citizens living outside the walls of Civilis Carnuntum have fled for their lives seeking shelter among the mountains east of the city. For the honour of Rome and the XIV Gemina here you will make your stand.

Given the importance of Civilis Carnuntum and the untried state of the troops replacing the losses from previous campaigns and victims of the plague, battlefield option one seems unlikely but a bold choice for a Roman commander to make a stand. Option 2 offers the stream as a defensive position but leaves little protection for an open left flank. Option 3 is possibly the best option for a cautious general, but we would encourage players to try them all.

The Game, the Battle of Carnuntum 170 AD: (Battlefield Two)

Roman governor Marco Iallio Basso Fabio Valeriano took command of the XIV Gemina and all the Auxilia from the outlying stations and would confront the barbarian menace at the second battlefield, beyond the Gladiator school. Forming up behind a small tributary flowing into the Danube his battle line would face west while a secondary wing would secure the open southern flank. This force contained the majority of Roman cavalry supported by a mix of legion and auxiliary units. Valeriano's main battle line was positioned astride the Roman road with a small cavalry reserve and personal bodyguard forming a second line.

The Marcomanni leader Balomar was aware of the general terrain features along the Danube having served the Romans as a negotiator several years before. Knowing that Rome would deploy behind one of several tributaries, he would use the Quadi to demonstrate against Valeriano's main force while enveloping the Roman open flank with all the Marcomanni.



Noting the Romans concentrated astride the Roman road, the Marcomanni leader Balomar would place his main effort against the open flank while sending a force to demonstrate in front of the Roman main body. Assigned to this, the Quadi were given the task of keeping Valeriano occupied, while all the Marcomanni would attack the Roman open left flank. The Marcomanni were divided into two wings; a mobile column positioned on the far right and in the centre, Balomar commanded all the Marcomanni infantry.

The timing of the assault was to be crucial, so the centre and Quadi demonstration needed to pace themselves so as to give time for the mobile column to encircle the Roman position.



The Marcomanni main infantry force maneuvered to attack as the Roman Legionary infantry and Auxilia prepared to defend the banks.



The Quadi and Marcomanni approach took a good hour (4 turns) to coordinate; sufficient time to intimidate the enemy knowing there was very little the Romans could do other than wait. Romans attacking across the tributary to meet the Quadi would be rash. In this photo the Quadi can be seen extending their front to match Valeriano's first line and in the two following photos the Marcomanni are closing the distance on the Roman wing.



With a good pip score, Marcomanni in the centre crossed the stream and in one rush struck the Roman line with both cavalry and infantry. This massive attack did result in some loss of elements for the Marcomanni, but did bring the Romans close to demoralization. To retrieve the situation on the left, Valeriano sent two legionary units to assist his wing commander and redeployed his remaining force to adjust to their vacated positions.

In subsequent turns, Valeriano took available units to form a second and shorter line on his left and the cavalry wing having lost one of their number dropped further back to shorten their line. At the tributary, Auxilia units are holding their own against the barbarians while veteran legionary (II Auditrix) in their euphoria are seen pursuing recoiling Marcomanni.

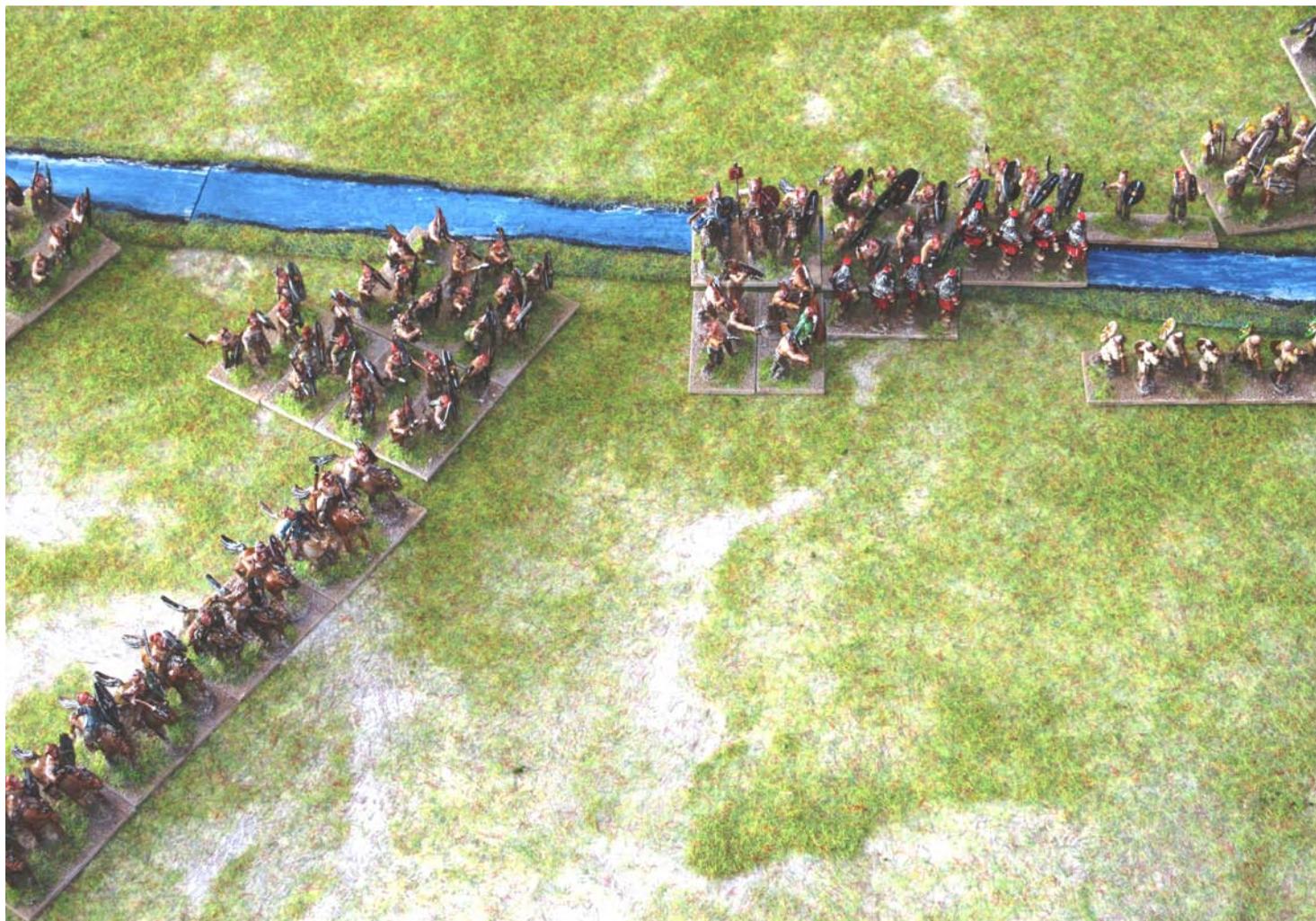
Valeriano realizing the Quadi threat was a mere demonstration, now sent two legionary units south and redeployed his remaining force.



The cavalry wing having lost one of their number dropped further back to shorten their line. At the tributary, Auxilia units held their own against the barbarians while veteran legionary (II Auditrix) are seen pursuing.



The situation of Rome looked very desperate at the start of turn 6, as mobile command was now demoralized. As desperate as the situation looked, all units engaged in combat held their positions. Further losses during turn 7 brought the demoralized left wing to a full rout and they were taken off the field.



Balomar and the Marcomanni, beating their weapons on shields, realigned his two commands to face the last Roman command. The Quadi, sensing victory, now moved to cross the tributary.

Valeriano, stripping units from behind the tributary line, is seen here creating a second line of blade, Auxilia and artillery to face the Marcomanni onslaught.



No one had told the Auditrix and Gemina that the situation was desperate as they were too involved with their battle.

Unfortunately for Valeriano as he was scrambling to save a deteriorating situation, detachments of the Auditrix and Gemina XIII were swept away in their bloodlust and pursued Marcomanni well beyond the sounds of the recall signal.



With the exception of the Auditrix and Gemina, turn 9 and 10 effectively brought a lull in the game while both sides positioned their troops.

This opportunity was not lost to Balomar and he seized the opportunity to crush two overzealous Roman units he signaled the Quadi to seal off their escape. Intent on establishing a new defensive position Valeriano could do nothing but look on in despair as the Auditrix and Gemina were slowly cut to pieces.

Turn 11, the Marcomanni looked like a solid wall as the Quadi now forming up across the tributary slowly lapping around the Roman position. It would seem a matter of time, before the route to Carnuntum would be cut.

By turn 11, the Auditrix succumbed to exhaustion were cut down and Gemina would follow on the next bound.



The game ended with the destruction of a blade and artillery. The final position of Gemina is that area surrounded by Quadi and Marcomanni in the upper left corner of the picture.

The Quadi had done their task well by demonstrating against Valeriano and threatening the road to Carnuntum. This created the needed time for Balomar to effectively select the best moment to crush the Roman left wing.

Final score for the game, 15 – 3 for the Marcomanni and Quadi.

Let the plunder of Carnuntum begin.

Aftermath:

From historical footnote to the game table...

Designing a scenario to duplicate the Battle of Carnuntum involved a great deal of detective work. This was definitely a rewarding experience as finding the name of Governor and commander Marco Iallio Basso Fabio Valeriano was done at Wiki Italian.

Before becoming governor of Pannonia Superior he commanded the XIV Gemina as their Legate during the campaign in Pannonia Inferior a decade earlier (160 AD). Through his accomplishments, he rose to become governor of Pannonia Superior by mid-decade. Finding this at Italian Wiki revealed much of what appears in Wiki English is not always a complete translation or that information has yet to be translated.

There were a number of issues that needed extensive research coupled with a heavy dose of good logic.

Where did the battle take place, what were the relative strengths of the two sides and within the structure of the DBA game how does one address the untried state of newly recruited troops?

The question of where the battle was fought was resolved by offering three possible sites. We know of the growth of Carnuntum from a legionary campsite to an administrative centre and capitol of Pannonia Superior is well documented in German sources, but of interest for this scenario was the gradual change to the landscape as the forested regions made way for a developing infrastructure and a growing agrarian economy. Topographical maps and information gleaned from the Carnuntum museum in Austria helped to formulate our possible battle sites.

The Antonine Plague did adversely affect the Roman army such that units were severely weakened or brought up to strength with many untried recruits. Duplicating the quality of troops is handled in other rule sets either by reducing the combat efficiency of the unit or recording the number turns engaged in activity (combat, movement, etc) . As the speed of the game is one of the finer aspects of DBA 3.0, it was decided adding extra numbers to the barbarian army would be a better solution to simulate the weakness of Roman forces recovering after the catastrophic plague than using fatigue markers awarded on recoils or some other method.

This brings us to the last issue, the relative size of the armies. We do know the Langobardi-Obii invasion of 167 AD had strength of 6,000 troops. The Marcomanni and Quadi being larger nations could easily assemble a larger force and chose to at least double the number. Considering the amount of damage dealt at Carnuntum, the sacking Opitergium and besieging Aquileia, we may even consider 15 – 18,000 troops as a plausible number invading Pannonia Superior.

On the Roman side, we do know which Legions and auxilia units were stationed in Pannonia Superior during the 2nd century and given a best case scenario we came up with sufficient units for 24 elements or two commands of Roman troops. The disparity between the two armies neatly solved the problem of troop quality without the need of recording fatigue or reducing combat factors.

If this is your first attempt at a big battle scenario and 3:2 odds may seem unbalanced, but remember this, in one of our test games the Romans did manage an upset; completely destroying the Quadi and breaking the coalition. I will not divulge on which battlefield that took place, but it did leave us to speculate would the Marcomanni Wars have lasted as long as they did if Carnuntum was a Roman victory?

Do the Romans have a chance to beat the Marcomanni? I believe so and during one of our test games, the Romans destroyed the Quadi and nearly broke a Marcomanni command for a win. That near victory generated some speculation as to whether the coalition would have made it as far as Aquileia on the Adriatic Sea.

Sources:

Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire* (A.D. 354 – 378), Penquin Classics, book 17, the early exploits of the Quadi are described in brief.

Cassius Dio, *History of Rome*, Loeb Classic Library, book LXXII,

Lucian of Samasota, *Alexander the False Prophet*, translated and notes A.M. Harmon, Loeb Classic Library, 1936, passage 48.

A Companion to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, Marcel van Ackeren, Blackwell Publishing, 2012, p.224

Die Chronologie der Markomannenkriege, Thorsten Steger, Friederich-Alexander University, Erlangen-Nürnberg. 2001

Carnuntum (Militärlager), Wikipedia, German text is far more detailed than the English translation.

Markomannenkriege, Wikipedia, the English version does not treat the German text fully.

Searching for a possible battlefield, I used online topographical and satellite photos. The reconstruction of Civilis Carnuntum and its environs including the Legionary fort of the Gemina XIII give a good reference to the topography of the area. The reconstruction can be viewed as a video at YouTube.

BATTLE OF HORMOZDGĀN, APRIL 28, 224 AD

The Fate of Parthia

"He collected soldiers in large numbers from Kerman, Mokristan, Spahan, and different districts of Pars, and came to fight with Artabanus (Artabanus V) . There was fighting and slaughter of many every day for four months. Artabanus sent for soldiers and provisions from different frontiers, such as Rai, Damawand, Delman, and Patashkhvargar. But as the Glory of the Kayanians was with Artashir, the latter gained success."

- The Book of Deeds of Artashir son of Babag.



The Historical Background:

At the start of the 3rd century AD, the political situation in Parthia was in a state of flux. Within the royal house, Artabanus V had wrested control of the empire from his father in 216 AD. Four years later, Vologases V, an elder brother seized the eastern domains for himself thereby splitting Parthia in two. Years earlier saw a proliferation of uprisings throughout the empire with rival houses seizing their moment to rebel against their overlord and one King Papaq (Babag) of Persis made his bid in 208 AD. Papaq would not however see the fruit of his effort, instead his son Artashir I would continue to kindle the flame of rebellion until all of Parthia would eventually be ruled by the House of Sassan.

The victory at Hormozdgān and the subsequent death of Artabanus V essentially ended the Arsacid dynasty. The eastern domains ruled by Vologases V crumbled a few years later under the relentless campaigns of Artashir I bringing an end to the 16 year long struggle for freedom which began in the province of Persis.

The Final Confrontation.

In the spring of 224 AD, Artabanus V took action to suppress the Persian rebellion by gathering as many loyal Parthian nobles and their vassal light cavalry to bring his army to more than 10,000 troops. As mentioned in the Persian royal history, the Book of Deeds, these came from Kerman, Mokristan, Spahan, and different districts of Pars plus members of royal houses with their vassal cavalry

Marching south from the capital of Ctesiphon, Artabanus V met Artashir on the open plain of Hormozd which lay in the shadow of the Bengestān Mountains, a part of the Zagros chain. Arriving before the Parthian army, Artashir I was able to secure the only viable water source in the area, the irrigation tanks filled from the Jerahi River.

Fighting the Battle:

The Iranian sources give Artashir I nearly 10,000 cavalry against which Artabanus V had assembled slightly more. Using the DBA 3.0 historical scale of 250 – 300 troopers per cavalry element, this brings the total somewhere between 33 and 40 elements, equating to three commands per side. This slight disparity of numbers can be seen below in the army totals. Take note the Sassan are considered a homogenous force as these came from Persis while Artabanus V with a loyal following collected a number of allies for this confrontation.

The number of elements listed below is given per command, therefore to arrive at the total number of Parthian elements factor this by two and for the Sassanid army by three. With the exception of the Arab ally, players may adjust their command totals to suit their strategy keeping in mind the minimum number required for the smallest command. To recreate the Battle of Hormozdgān we recommend using the larger game board giving an overall dimension of 80 cm x 160 cm.

Sources are not in agreement about the number of days in which the battle was fought, but most state either two or three days and for this scenario we choose two. This gives players a “night” to reorganize their commands for the following day as this would be done in real life. For this scenario any command demoralized on day one recovers during the night and is ready to fight the next day with albeit a lesser break point score and any generals lost on day one are easily replaced by an eager underling. The Arab ally however, must carry over any loss it received to the next day.

Order of Battle:

Parthia (II/37, the attacker)

Two commands, each of

3 x Cataphract* (4Kn)

9 x Vassal horse archers.

Parthian commanders, Artabanus V (CinC), General Dāḡbondād

Nomad Pre-Islamic Arabs (II/23a)

One command:

2 x Light horse (LH)*

1 x Scout (LCm)

4 x Camel riders (Cm)

3 x Swordsmen (4Bd)

1 x archer (3Bw)

1 x slingers (Ps).

Total Parthian army = 36 elements

Sassan (II/69a, the defender)

Three commands, each of

3 x Knights* (3Kn)

4 x Asavaran (Cv)

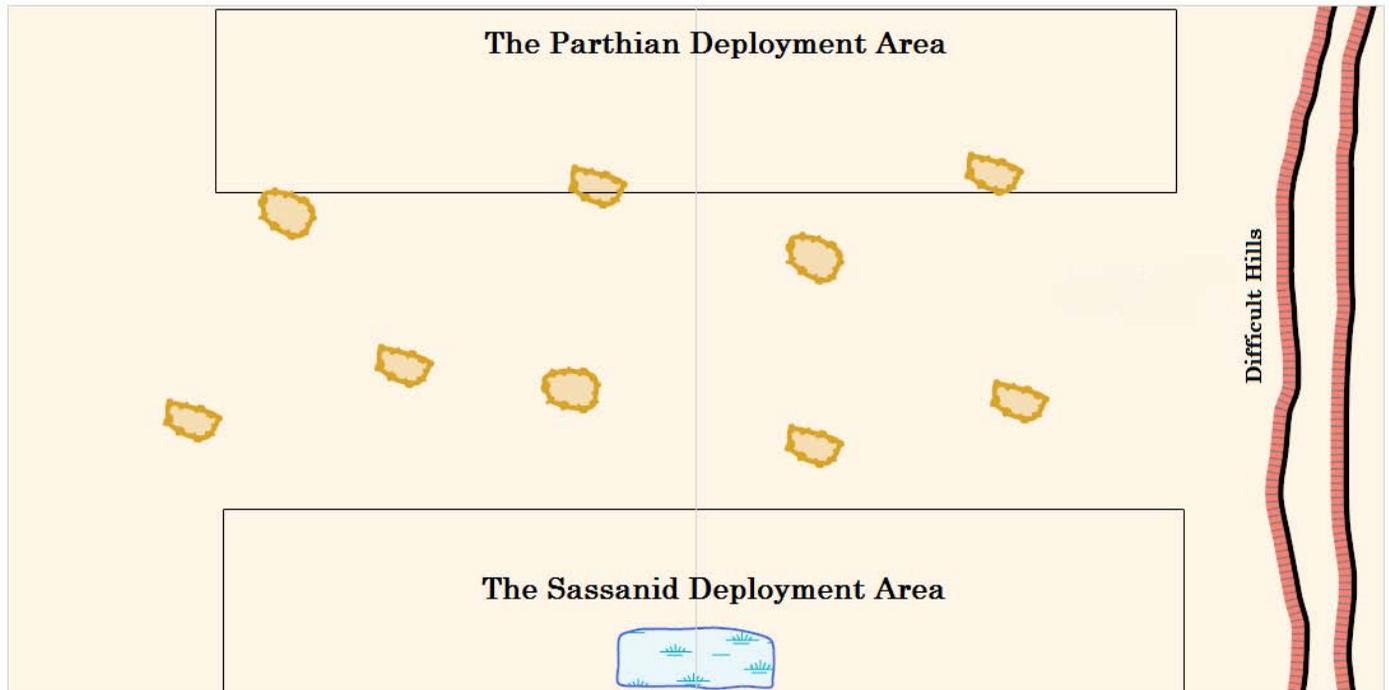
4 x Vassal horse archers.

Sassan commanders, Artashir I (CinC), General Shapur (son of Artashir I),

Total Sassanid army = 33 elements.

*this total includes a general of that type per command.

The Map:



The Plain of Hormozd.

North of the Jerahi River is a flat open expanse of terrain known as the plain of Hormozd. Ideal for cavalry the plain borders the range of hills which are represented on the game board by difficult hills east of the battle area. It is from this range of mountains from which tributaries of the Jerahi River provide a source of water for the fields near Hormozdgān, located off table. To provide a consistent source of water throughout the season water tanks were constructed for which one is placed in the Sassanid deployment area.

Terrain Options.

No terrain features are mentioned in the sources and none can be readily seen from the satellite photos I have viewed, but players may wish to add scatter material such as scrub or single acacia trees to bring colour to a featureless board. Another option, the defender may place 2 -4 of rough ground as per placement rule, but these behave as plough and will become rough ground on a total die score of 8 or less. A higher score will mean these pose no obstacle for movement.

Day One.

Iranian sources describe the battle as lasting two days and this “may” suggest an initial confrontation during the late afternoon. Rather than determine the time of day by casting a die and track the necessary turns until dusk, we opted for a simpler solution.

The Sassanid player (defender) deploys all his commands followed by the Parthian player. As the battle commences with the defender taking the first move play continues (completing each bound) until one side has lost four elements. The game stops as this represents the onset of dusk at which time both sides will return to their respective camps and resume battle the next day. Elements still in combat will break off and return to camp.

Day Two.

The defender and attacker role remain unchanged for the second day, therefore Sassan places all his commands on the table followed by the Parthian player. The Parthian player must eliminate three vassal light horse elements to represent the desertion of troops after the first day. These elements are counted as lost and break points are adjusted accordingly.

The Game, the Battle of Hormozdgān:

Ardashir's army with its right resting on the foothills of the Bengestān Mountains extended west toward the open plain of Hormozd. The central command under Ardashir contained the majority of the nobles (3Kn) and this would become a ready reserve for either flank. His son Shapur commanded the right wing and would lead today's battle. The left wing under the command of his father's favourite, Ferrozdgad would only demonstrate against the enemy in front so as to give time to the centre and right wing to develop their attack.

Artabanus V noting the importance of several rebel banners deployed his own command opposite that of Ardashir and gave General Dāḡbondād command of the left wing with a free hand to destroy his opposition. The Arabs were content to be positioned on the open flank, though half their number consisted of infantry their flanks were ably supported by camel mounted warriors and light horse. As daylight would quickly become dusk, Artabanus V would test the rebel strength on their flanks and so issued orders to his wing commanders to attack.



Moving forward at a “walk” the Sassan right wing kept pace with the entire battle line, only the horse archers on the right moved ahead to close the distance between them and the Parthian line. At the army’s centre Ardashir sent his horse archers to harass their opposite number and dispatched additional light horse to support Shapur’s attack. On the left, the main formation held their position leaving only the light cavalry to move forward and harass the Arabs.

Eager to fight, General Dāḍbondād moved his armoured horse flanked by columns of horse archers against the Sassanid left. The intended move would take advantage of their number in an attempt to overlap the Sassan formation. The slow cadence of their approach coupled with the skirmishing light cavalry dust clouds were thrown up cloaking the left side of the battlefield. Despite this, the turn following, the shock of the heavily armoured horse of both sides could be clearly heard across the field.

Having the slight advantage of numbers, the Sassan units fell back to regroup while the Parthian formations held their ground. No casualties could be seen among the rebels, but as the dust cleared, General Dāḍbondād noticed one of their numbers had fallen.



The loss on the Parthian side raised Sassan hopes such that on their bound all available Sassan units were pushed forward to follow up that small success. This was met with solid resistance by the Parthian which resulted in a frustrating bound.

Furious at the loss of their brethren, General Dāḍbondād launched all his units forward into battle. This succeeded in taking out a unit of light horse bringing the score even, 1 – 1.

Turn three found the centre command in striking distance, so to relieve the pressure on Shapur Ardashir launched his attack against Artabanus. Both forces were so evenly matched that after the initial clash of combat both sides drew back to regroup and try again. Unfortunately, this battle did not have the desired result as Ardashir lost a unit of Asavaran cavalry while Shapur lost a further two units light horse bringing the score 4 -1 for Parthia.



As night approached, both sides broke off combat and returned to their respective camps. In the Parthian camp, the nobles were boasting how they would crush the Persians like sand fleas in the morning. Whether it was the abundance of wine or the natural arrogance of the Parthian nobles, much of the boasting did not sit well with the Persians who fought with Artabanus V that day. As night slowly turned to an early sunny morning, Parthian guards alerted Artabanus of the desertion of several units of Persian horse archers.

Realizing that his advantage of numbers was now lost Artabanus V quickly gathered his war council to issue new deployment orders for the morning. {1}

Hormozdgān, the Second Day.



Ardashir moved his army out and formed his troops in the same manner as the day before. On the right, Shapur's command, now reinforced with the Persian patriots confronted a new foe, the Arabs. Anxious that news of the Persian defection might alter his ally's willingness to fight, Artabanus V re-deployed the Arabs to the left informing them that the opposing side had been weakened and their rout would enable them to loot the Sassan camp. Smiling at that prospect they cheerfully repositioned themselves to the left wing.

Feeling cheated at an opportunity to fight the Parthian, Shapur received confirmation from Ardashir I that Artabanus had indeed switched both his flanks and that Shapur will have to deal with a stronger foe, albeit desert bandits.

The feeling in both camps was that today would be a decisive day. Secure in that sentiment all generals present positioned themselves on the front line with their banners floating above the heads of their retinue. Everything would be committed to today's battle.



Moving first, Ardashir needed to readjust his left and own commands from their current position. To correct this both formations would need to wheel their lines toward the left. Once executed this would bring their groups in alignment with the Parthian formations and bring the Sassan nobles facing their counterpart in the enemy formation. More importantly, the adjustment would bring the Sassan nobles out of reach from the columns of enemy horse archers. The Asavaran cavalry were ideally suited to deal with the Parthian menace.

Calculating that this maneuver would take two bounds Ardashir now had ample time to create room for reserve units to move forward. Doing so at full speed, this move would extend the battle line and overlap the Parthian formations.

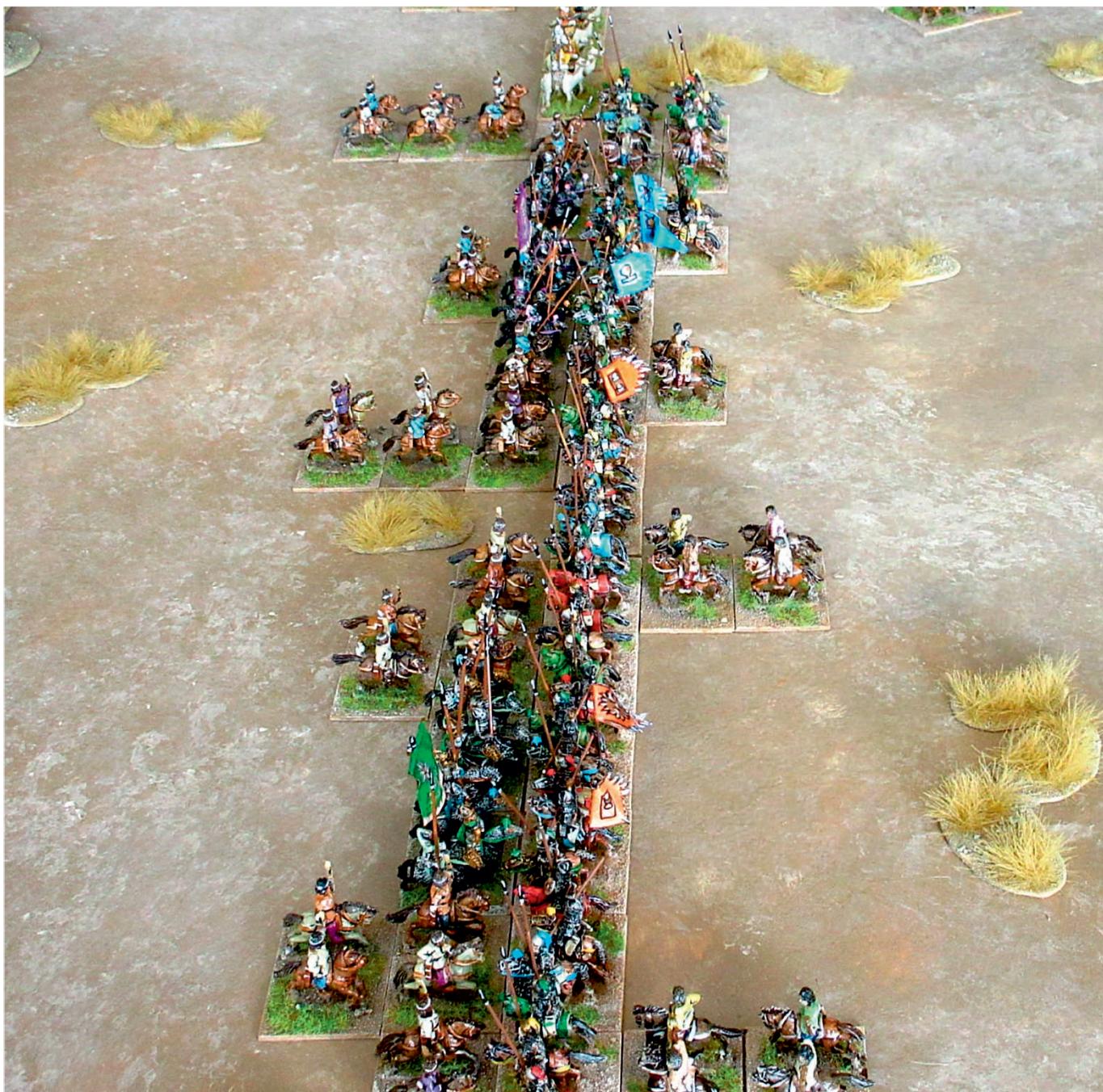
On the opposite side, the Parthian was content to let the weight of armoured nobles and their horse archers crush the rebellious Persians. The Arabs for their part were happy with the prospect of looting the camp and so moved steadily forward maintaining their alignment on the slowest units in their battleline, the tribal swordsmen. With the archers and skirmishers nestled between the infantry the formation was well protected with Camel mounted troops on either flank.

Turn two, Sassan's centre and left wing were the first to make contact. The resulting melees were brief clashes with both sides recoiling for their effort. On the right Shapur, imitating the maneuver done by the other two commands, moved forward his horse archers to extend his own formation. As he faced mostly infantry, this maneuver would run less risk than if executed in front of an all mounted force.



From his position, Artabanus I caught sight of Artabanus' Royal standard and called for a general assault. Confident that his troops were optimally positioned each would have a slight advantage over their opponents and more importantly, this would give him a chance for personal combat with the King of Parthia.





Up and down the line every Parthian and Sassanid unit was committed to the monumental task ahead. Each side could claim a small advantage by prompting their enemy to recoil under the weight of their fury, but the Sassanid nobles proved tenacious by following up their minor advantages.

At this critical juncture, both Sassan flanks lost an element each and that was the moment when all eyes looked toward the final melee of the bound; Ardashir I vs. Artabanus V. Inspired by the presence of their leader Ardashir, the nobles on both flanks had pushed their opposition back on their heels, exposing the flanks of Artabanus V command element.



The die cast sealed the fate of the Parthian dynasty and had our game had repeated history; Artabanus V died, bringing the score even $2(G) - 2$, but the day was still young and Parthia would now fight for their lives. {2}



The nomad Arabs for their part had weakened Shapur's right wing and sent several units to the otherworld. In a desperate response, Shapur launched all his cavalry at the Arab infantry line while the horse archers, seen in the upper right of the photo would deal with the Camel mounted troops. The subsequent melee brought both sides to exhaustion having simultaneously reaching their break point {3}. The turns that followed Shapur was able to hold his troops together and remain on the field as the Arabs were seen to gradually disappear.

On the Sassan left wing, neither side could wrest an advantage from the other, which meant losses on both sides were insignificant by comparison to what happened in the centre. Lacking their leader, the Parthian troops were slowly crumbling under the Sassan fury. Ardashir I personally destroyed a second unit of nobles and with the efforts of the Arsavan cavalry brought the central to demoralization. With two commands demoralized the battle was over bringing the score to 13(G) – 6 for Sassan.

Notes:

{1} Before resuming the battle, both sides now adjust their command strengths and recalculate the break point necessary to reach demoralization. The Sassanid player deploys all his commands on the table first followed by the Parthian player. The game is played until one side has lost two commands through demoralization or 50 % of their side's total elements. The Parthian player counts the three defecting LH as lost elements.

{2} At this point in the game, the loss of a general means for the remainder of the game any tactical moves made by a group or single element within that command would cost an extra +1. This means the battle is not lost but command and control for those units affected now become difficult.

{3} In rare situations opposite commands can bring each other to demoralization in the same bound and this was the case here with both sides reaching that point. Subsequent die throws would count for the number of elements or groups that hold their position and in this case the nomads were slowly leaving giving Shapur the field.

Aftermath:

Analysis of game vis-à-vis historical outcome...

In ancient and medieval history there are a number of recorded instances of battles lasting two days or more, so the Battle of Hormozdgān is certainly not unique. Using the number of elements lost to represent the passage of time was deemed a simpler solution than determining a start time with the necessary tracking of subsequent turns until dusk is reached. As the battle was fought in late April, dusk would approach sooner than later.

To do this scenario as a three day battle was considered; each day's combat stopping after a set goal was reached. We found however, the third and final day would be over far too soon to be an enjoyable game, so for the sake of a big battle game we focused on a two day confrontation with the defection of troops from the Parthian camp presenting a nice twist.

The defection of the Persian contingents is mentioned in the sources and this did give an advantage to Ardashir I. We can only speculate how this news was received by the Parthian king and how it influenced his tactics for the final day, but for the scenario we thought how this might unbalance the game. Considering that both sides most likely would score losses on the first day, in our test games we found the defection of the vassal light horse actually balanced the total strength for the next day. The rest was up to the cunning of each player to win the game.

The scenario was thoroughly play test and with each game delivering different results; the Sassan won most of the tests and the Arabs survived every encounter excepting this one. Artabanus V did die once before as did both Ardashir and Shapur in the same battle and on the same bound, so much for history repeating itself. Parthia does have the advantage setting up after the defender's placement of his troops and in this particular game the re-deployment of the Arabs to the opposite wing had the desired effect of containing Shapur.

Sources:

The Kârnâmag î Ardashîr î Babagân ('Book of the Deeds of Ardashir son of Babag'), Translated by Darab Dastur Peshotan Sanjana, B.A., 1896. Chapter 4. 9-14

Touraj Daryaee, Sasanian Persia, the Rise and Fall of an Empire,

Michael M. Dudgeon and Samuel N.C. Lieu, The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars AD 226 – 363, chapter 1.

John Macdonald Kinneir, A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire, 1813, p. 58, describes the region and principle towns bordering the Jerahi River.

George Rawlinson, Parthia, Putnam and Sons, 1893, chapter XXII.

The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, 1833, Volume 3, p. 262, description of the region about the Jerahi River.

Irfan Shahid, Rome and the Arabs, Dumbarton Oaks, 1986.

Yarmuk 636 AD

Khalid Ibn al-Walid and the lions of the desert

It was the eve of Yarmuk the greatest battle of the Century.... one of the decisive battles of history and perhaps the most titanic battle ever fought between the Crescent and the Cross. (Akram: The Sword of Allah - Khalid bin Al-Waleed - His Life and Campaigns)



The Historical Background:

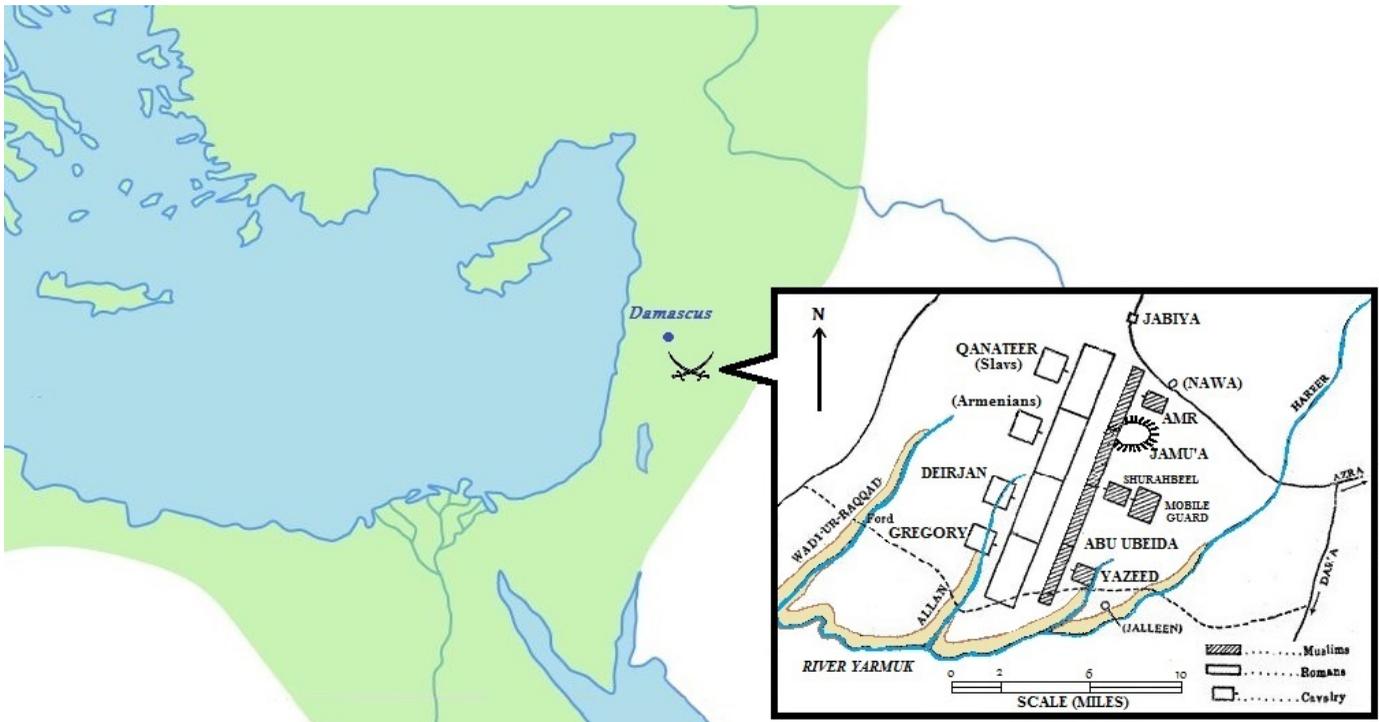
An enormous engagement with a number of individual actions, Yarmuk was fought over several days in August 636 AD. Though one of the most important battles in world history, today it is difficult to piece together. But its outcome signaled the absolute shift from a Byzantine, arguably Christian, Middle East to a familiar, Islamic, and Arab, Middle East.

Under the Prophet, the Arabian Peninsula had been unified and an expanding Arab state pushed against the warring great powers of Byzantium Empire (Rome) and Sassanian Persia.

The attention of the Empire had been almost entirely absorbed in the defeat of its rival Persia when, in 634, Damascus fell to Arab forces under the command of Khalid ibn Al Walid. The Byzantine Empire would have to respond to a new threat to its integrity.

The Emperor Heraclius assembled a massive army to confront the quickly growing Arab state consisting of some core Byzantines, many Armenians, remnant Persians and Ghassanid Arabs. The numerical advantage over the Arab invaders may have been as much as 4:1 although precise numbers are difficult to assess.

The Byzantine army was drawn by the retiring Arabs onto the large open Yarmuk plateau – flat, well-watered and excellent for mobile warfare but fatally surrounded by waddis and steep ravines from which a mass retreat would prove impossible.



Khalid ibn al-Walid الوليد بن خالد

Like many figures in Islamic history no contemporary likeness of Khalid exists- although we do know he was accustomed to wear a red cap in which he had had sewn a lock of the Prophet's hair (we are told he dropped the cap on the battlefield at Yarmuk and detailed a search to find it: Akram p.439). He had a swarthy appearance with dark beard and a face scarred from an early bout of smallpox ... He was probably born in Mecca in 592 and initially fought against the Prophet in the wars of unification.

Subsequently he held senior command under the Prophet and the Caliphs Abu Bakr and Umar until Umar dismissed him at the height of his powers.

Khalid fought in over 50 battles without suffering defeat and was instrumental in transforming the Arab armies from desert raiders into a military machine that could fight and win pitched battles against the great empires of Rome and Persia. His contemporaries dubbed him *the Sword of Allah* and his reputation as a commander stands second only perhaps to the great Saladin

Fighting the Battle:

Ostensibly Yarmuk (636) pits a DBA **III/25(a)** *Arab Conquest* 622-638 against a DBA **III/17** *Maurikian Byzantine* 575-650 army. There are some problems with this interpretation ...

All accounts agree that Khalid employed a sizable cavalry reserve (1) in action throughout the battle (which had the decisive effect in the phase we have chosen to represent) ... III/25(b) with its *jund* (regular well-trained horsemen) cavalry looks much more like the army at Yarmuk.

Akram gives a basic ratio of 25% mounted and 4,000 as the size of Khalid's mobile reserve.

Additionally, Khalid's army swelled with defectors, particularly Lahkmids and Gassanids, from the Byzantines, so we should allow some elements from the Maurikians' Arab allies: II/23(a) Later Pre-Islamic Arab (nomad).

There has been some debate over the years as to how best to represent the vast bulk of Arab infantry often described in this period as spearmen and mixing spears, swords and bows.

Akram states ... "the Muslim army formed a thin line, only three ranks deep, but there were no gaps in the ranks which stretched in unbroken lines from edge to edge. All the spears available in the army were issued to the front rank, and in battle the men would stand with the long spears at the ready, making it impossible for an assailant to get to grips without braving the frightening points of the spears."

Playtesting the battle of Yarmuk, we have decided that, in DBA terms, *Spear* best represents their dogged holding of the line while the battle evolves around them.

The scenario is little changed by using the standard DBA depiction (although *Blade* will be more brittle where they face enemy on horseback) ... Players can choose which to use but on the basis of playtesting and sources, *Spear* is recommended for this specific battle.

The (2) huge Byzantine army was amassed from Persian, Arab and Armenian recruits and may not have looked that different from its Arab enemies. The Persian and Arab troops are allowed by the DBA 3.0 rubric, the Armenians were probably transitioning into the Byzantine style cavalry we see in the Rshtuni army of III/27 - so we can probably build all this from the existing list(s).

For a game depicting the cavalry battle on day four, centred on the Byzantine left centre (Vahan/Qanateer) and left wing (Jabala) vs the Arab right centre (Qays/Khalid) and right wing (Amr) we might end up with a third of either side comprising infantry, the rest mounted reserves and wings...

Using the figures I had available and after some trialing and modification I ended up with...

Order of Battle:

Arab Conquest: III/25(a/b) with Later Pre-Islamic Arab Allies II/23(a)

2 x Cv Gens, Khalid and Amr

4 x Cv [*Khalid's reserve*],

4 x other Cv [*1 nomad, 3 jund*] (Total 41%),

6 x LH (Total 27%),

5x Sp

1x 3Bw

2x Ps (Foot Total 32%)

Byzantines: III/17 Maurikian Byzantine

2 x Cv Gens, Vahan and Qanateer

6 x 6Cv (Total 27%),

2 x 3Kn,

1 x Cv,

1 x 4Kn,

4 x LH (Total 365)

4x 4Bd

2x 4Bw

2x Ps (Foot Total 36%)

What did the armies look like?

There are precious few illustrations of soldiers from this battle, particularly of the Arab army. However, the armies may not have looked that different from each other: the Byzantine force is described as comprising Armenians, Persians and a large force of Ghassanid Arabs ... the Arab army was swelled with defectors from the Byzantines (including many of their Arab allies).

We would expect many of the regular Byzantines to be equipped from state supplies but evidence suggests helmets were often worn under headcovers (not unlike early turbans) and that the Arabs used a mix of armour both captured and copied from Byzantine types.

Both armies also seem to have used adopted Persian styles – though I have assumed only the Byzantine force would have made extensive use of heavily armoured horsemen on fully or partially armoured horses.



BYZANTINES (original number of the entire army per Akram c. 150,000)

Slav Army: 12 elements, Breakpoint: 4

Cv Gen (Qanateer), 3x6Cv, 3xLH, 1xCv, 2x4Bd, 2x4Bw

Armenian Army: 12 elements (ringed on diagram), Breakpoint: 4

Cv Gen (Vahan), 3x6Cv, 2x3Kn, 1x4Kn, 1xLH, 2x4Bd, 2xPs



ARABS (original number of the entire army per Akram c. 40,000)

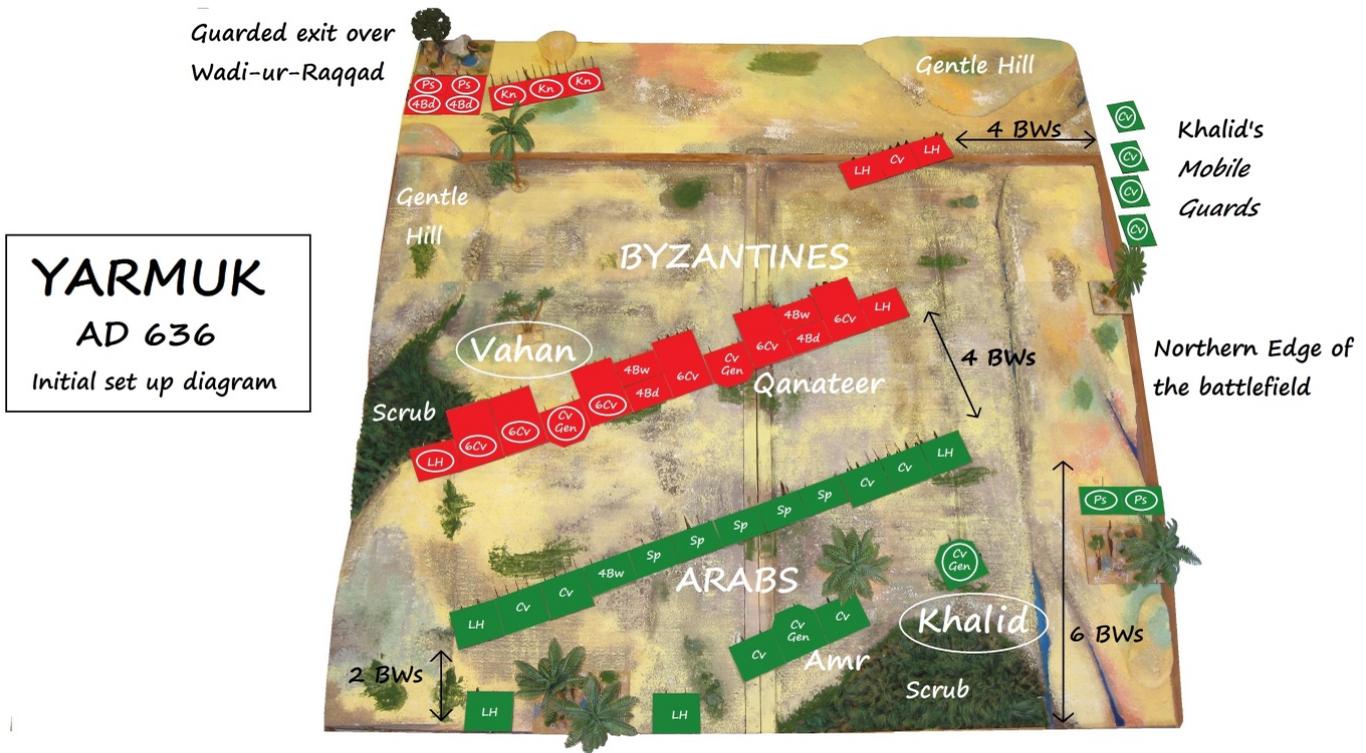
The Northern Battleline: 17 elements, Breakpoint: 6

CvGen (Amr Ibn al As), 4xCv, 6xLH, 5xSp, 1x4Bw

The Mobile Reserve: 7 elements (ringed on diagram), Breakpoint: 4

CvGen (Khalib Ibn al Walid), 4xCv, 2xPs

The Map:



The diagram shows the distances groups need to be deployed from each other on an open plain bordered with gentle hills and scrub. The battle can perfectly well be fought on an entirely open board (the added details are entirely speculative).

The elements in Vahan's Command and Khalid's have each been ringed for clarity.

Special Rules:

Byzantines ...

Vahan is the commander-in-chief but the player may pick which command gets the higher die per the Big Battle DBA Rules.

You must win by demoralizing both enemy commands – pushing them off the table will do. You must not lose your camp which represents your way back across the Wadi. It is well guarded for this reason (but you may choose of course to pull the guards forward into the battle and rely on the camp's usual CFs).

Arabs ...

Khalid is the C-in-C but may allocate pip dice. In addition to some camp guards, Khalid controls the Mobile Reserve (4 elements of Cv) ... these appear similarly to a littoral landing, with a BW anywhere along the table's North edge. Although they fight and move as Cv they are treated as LH for command range. Khalid's own element may come on with them or be deployed normally as shown on the deployment map.

Khalid used the Mobile Reserve to shore up the line until he could manoeuvre it with devastating effect behind the Byzantine's flank, routing their cavalry reserves and cutting their retreat. You may have a better plan. The Byzantines lose if their camp falls.

The game represents the significant cavalry battle on the Northern flank on the penultimate day of fighting.

He who stands bravely before the blade of the sword will be honoured, and his labours rewarded, when he goes before Allah.

Khalid Ibn Al Walid addressing his soldiers on the eve of Yarmuk

The Game:

The final play test of this Great Battle was at the 2015 **Conference of Wargamers** (WD's annual development weekend in Northamptonshire).

We pick up the battle narrative when the Arab cavalry reserve makes its surprise appearance behind the Byzantine position. The battle is essentially a race against time: the outflanked Byzantines must crush the enemy battleline before their wing and rear is destroyed.



The Arabs must hold the line long enough for their elite force to swing the battle.



Unfortunately, pips (and the threat to their flank) meant that, in the game, the Byzantines were not able to attack all along the line and take the battle to the Arabs. The Commanders attacked nevertheless, but suffered piecemeal losses as the Arab line held.

The time for generalship and maneuver was over. The skill of the general had placed the troops in the ideal situation for combat, and it was up to the soldiers to fight and win. The generals drew their swords and became warriors like the rest, as the lions of the desert moved in for the final kill. (Akram p. 448)



Poor dice rolls exacerbated the Byzantine's problems as their forces were quickly split up, surrounded and annihilated. Vahan's senior army evaporated first, enabling Amr's cavalry to push beyond the end of the line and link up with Khalid's Mobile Guard.



With their forces fragmented, the Byzantine Commanders never had enough pips to bring forward their reserve line to plug the gaps or prevent the encirclement.

Qanateer's Slav recruits were assailed on all sides and succeeded only in holding out for a couple more turns. They won few exchanges with the dominant Arabs.

Both Commanders died leading their troops, Vahan shot down by Arab archery, Qanateer surrounded by enemy horsemen.

The Byzantine were broken ... for the loss of 1 element of cavalry from Khalid's *Mobile Guard*.



This was the most emphatic Arab win in all the trial games - but on public debut, quite probably the most historical outcome.

In 636, Khalid's cavalry maneuver completely outflanked the Byzantines and led to the destruction of Vahan's cavalry and reserves, cutting the army's retreat. It went very badly for the remaining troops.

Aftermath:

It was not until day 3 or 4 of this defensive battle that Khalid went onto the front foot and managed to redeploy his cavalry reserve behind the Byzantine left wing and in a position to out maneuver Vahan's cavalry reserves and rear guards. Military historians still debate whether Khalid managed this by getting around the enemy, by getting through a gap in the line, or by concealing his troops and letting the enemy push past them. Perhaps Khalid was prepared to allow repeated attacks on his rear and baggage (as seems to have typified at least 2 days of fighting) until the Byzantines were over committed or just stretched too far ...

The attack of Khalid's reserve, which is what we have chosen to model for the reconstruction, was decisive. Unable to redeploy sufficiently quickly – and maybe 'surprised' by the speed and direction of the attack – much of Vahan's cavalry (and the remains of Arab auxiliaries) were destroyed or driven from the field, leaving the centre isolated and surrounded. Although the fighting seems to have continued for a further couple of days, the battle was won. Vahan's trapped army was annihilated.

In contrast, the Byzantines seemed to have operated far forward of their camp and ultimately seem to have gotten cut off from it.

Behind part of the Roman position, however, lay the forbidding ravine of the Wadi-ur-Raqqad-deep and precipitous. As a discouragement to retreat this was fine and would probably make the Romans fight more desperately; but in case the Romans were worsted in battle and cut off from the northern escape route, the ravine would prove an abyss of death. (Akram)

Before his conversion Khalid had successfully used outflanking against the Muslims at Uhud and encirclement decisively against the Sassanids at Walaja in 633 ... so we should probably look at the days of jockeying and skirmishing at Yarmuk as Khalid trying to draw the Byzantines forward, setting them up so he was able to employ his preferred tactic and defeat a much larger enemy. With hindsight, Vahan was enticed into a trap.

Against the anvil of the Wadi-ur-Raqqad the Muslim hammer had crushed the Roman army to powder
(Akram p. 451)



Further Reading:

Heath, Ian: *Armies of the Dark Ages, 600-1066 A.D.* WRG, May 1980

Nicolle, David: *Yarmuk AD 636*, Osprey Campaign Series no. 31 1994

Akram, Lt Gen A. I: *The Sword of Allah – Khalid bin Al-Waleed*, 1970 (I have the 2014 edition)

Nicolle has some useful information on the Byzantine army but adds next to nothing of use on the Arabs.

Akram has a great deal of material on the Yarmuk campaign almost all derived from original Arabic accounts. My interpretation closely follows Akram (which I found the most useful account) and I regard it as an essential read for the enthusiast interested in this period.

Notes:

(1) Sources generally agree that the Mobile Guard numbering 4,000 was formed in 634 (perhaps implying that the start date for III/25(b) should be taken backwards by 4 years.

(2) Names: Nicolle and Akram differ ... Akram uses *Mahan*, Nicolle *Vahan* ... for the Slav contingent Nicolle say *Buccinator*, Akram *Qanateer* ... I cannot resolve this confusion (I simply prefer *Vahan* and *Qanateer* as the commonest usage)

BRUNANBURH 937 AD

The Birthplace of “Englishness”

*There by Brunanburh,
Brake the shield-wall,
Hew'd the linden-wood,
Hack'd the battle-shield,
Sons of Edward with hammer'd brands.”*

From Lord Alfred Tennyson's 1876 Translation of the ASC Poem



The Historical Background:

Alfred the Great's successful defense of the Anglo-Saxon world against Viking invaders was continued by his successors. Building on Alfred's stout resistance, his son and grandsons took the offensive driving the Norse invaders back through north England and even threatening the kingdom of the Scots and the people of Strathclyde.

Using diplomacy, marriage, and outright invasion Alfred's grandsons, King Aethelstan and his half brother Edward, retook York from the Danes. England was finally under one overlord. Old ways die hard however. The northern British petty kingdoms resented the southern rule. Many of the noble families were thoroughly intermarried with the Danes. These ties of blood coupled with the resentment against southern rule prompted Olaf the Norse King of Dublin to act. Allying with his father in law, Constantine the Christian king of the Scots, Olaf invaded England to win back his lost domains in York. Securing another ally in Owain the king of Strathclyde the invading armies had sufficient numbers to start the campaign.

King Aethelstan and his brother Edward carefully gathered an army to oppose Olaf. Insuring the neutrality of the southern Welsh kingdoms to protect their flank, the brothers marched north to decide the fate of England.

Fighting the Battle:

Brunanburh presents several challenges to the wargamer. The surviving sources give an interesting mix of high-level overview with the “Battle of Brunanburh” poem from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and gritty low-level eye witness accounts with Egil Skallgrimson’s rather fun saga poetry. Lacking however are important military details such as the numbers involved and even the location of the battlefield.

The current best thinking is that the battle was fought on the Wirral Peninsula. The history of the area’s place names seems to support this argument as well as the settlement history of the peninsula. Settled by the Danes for a long period before the battle and on the western coast, the peninsula made a natural strong point for the Danish invasion. Olaf had been delayed in invading till latter in the year only cementing his kingship of Dublin in August by defeating his rival Amlaib Cenncairech at Limerick. The Wirral Peninsula seems a logical invasion and mustering point for the invading armies. Lacking other better arguments, we will assume this is the battlefield.

Determining the numbers involved requires some guesswork. Certainly 123 years later the Vikings were able to muster probably 6-9000 men for an invasion. Olaf felt the need for alliances to meet the numbers of the successful and resurgent southern British kingdoms. All of the primary sources speak of a huge battle with about equal numbers per side. Counting 400 men per element (just under DBA 3’s stated scale of 500) and using Stamford Bridge and Hastings as guides, the battle will be well represented as a double sized game. Thus, we have approximately 9,000 men per side.

For the course of the battle we must trust Egil’s saga, our only source for detail. Both Egil and his brother lead contingents of Saxon Huscarles. Though some of Egil’s tale can be challenged by historians as fiction, his battle account renders the convincing narrative of both an eyewitness and participant. His heroics are balanced by the loss of his brother and his subsequent grief. Aethelstan intervenes to sooth Egil’s grief and thereby wins his personal friendship and loyalty.

Order of Battle:

DBA 3 allows some interesting options in rendering the Orders of Battle. The Saxons (III/24b) are now well served by the addition of 4Bd Huscarles representing Household guards and the hiring of Viking mercenaries.

Saxons:

1st command: Aethelstand. Breakpoint 4

1x 4Bd General CinC (Aelstand and his Huscarles)

2x 4Bd Huscarles

9x Sp (Fyrd)

2nd command: Edward. Breakpoint 4

1x 4Bd General (Edward and his Huscarles)

1x 4Bd Huscarles lead by Egil

1x 4Bd Huscarles (lead by Thorolf- Egil’s Brother)

6x Sp (Fyrd)

1x 7Hd (Lesser Fyrd)

2x Ps (young men with Javelins)

The Allied army is represented by one command of Vikings with northern Saxon allies and one of pre-feudal Scots (III/45) with Strathclyde allies. The Vikings are best simulated by the early Viking army list (III/40a) of lighter armed raiders buttressed by a large number of Huscarles representing the additional Viking nobility that joined the invasion. This fits well with Olaf’s force being a seaborne invading army and works better than the later Viking list. The northern Saxon/Dane allies are short one element due to the skirmish the day before the battle where Edgil and his brother routed the northern lords. The Scots have the Strathclyde army as an ally. While the very existence of the Strathclyde contingent at the battle is questionable, their inclusion

as an ally makes for an interesting command problem for the Scots and shows some of the problems that face allied armies.

Allied Army:

1st Command: Vikings under Olaf Guthfrithson. Breakpoint 4

- 1x 4Bd General CinC (Olaf)
- 2x 4Bd (Huscarles under lesser Viking Kings)
- 5x 3Bd Viking Raiders
- 1x Ps (young Vikings acting as skirmishers)
- 2x Sp Allied (Northern Troops Allied with Olaf)

2nd Command: Constantine of Scotland. Breakpoint 4

- 1x Cv General (Constantine and his Thegns)
- 1x 4Wb (Constantine's son and nobles)
- 6x 3Pk (Scots infantry)
- 1x Ps (skirmishers)

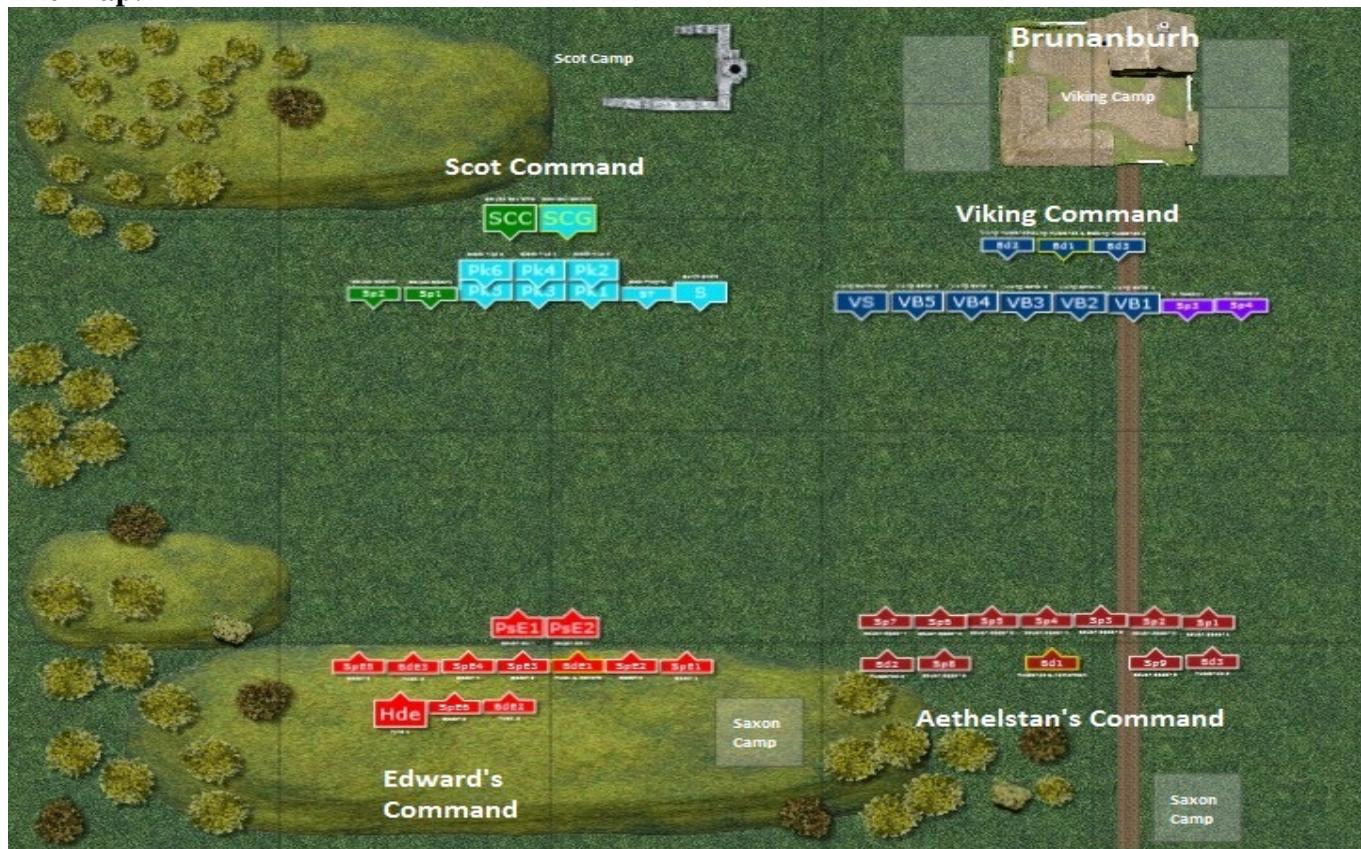
Allies: Owain of Strathclyde

- 1x Cv General (Owain and his guards)
- 2x Sp (Strathclyde Spearmen)

Special Rules:

The Big Battle DBA 3 rule removing an army with the loss of ½ their elements is suspended. Victory is achieved by breaking both enemy commands. Plough becomes rough going on an initial roll for the defender (Allied Armies) that sums 5 or less. The Scots army is an ally and requires a separate command dice. The Saxons roll two dice and distribute them at will.

The Map:



Map Notes:

The map is 5'x4' scaled for a 25mm scale battle. Scale down by 2/3rds for 15mm battle.

The Game:

Edward and his men faced the Scots and the Welsh while Aethelstan faced Olaf, his nemesis.



The Vikings decided to quickly advance into battle, trusting that their combat advantage would shatter the Saxon line and make up for their one element deficit. Witnessing Olaf's quick advance, Aethelstan ordered Edward's front line off the hill to close the gap between Saxon forces. Seeing that the Viking's line was thin, Aethelstan ordered his right reserve to move to the flank to force a further extension of the Viking line.



The Scots advanced as well, but were stymied by the Saxon skirmishers that kept up a lively fire of javelins and other missiles (represented by the stout Psiloi screen).



Frustrated by his infantry's disorganization over attacking the Saxon skirmishers, Constantine ordered Owain and the Strathclyde horse to flank the Saxon line. Moving with great energy, Owain's horsemen caught the Saxon flank in confusion and broke fyrd unit. Edward in a panic committed himself and the lesser fyrd against the Strathclyde horse.

Meanwhile, Olaf used his reserve huscarles to successfully counter Aethelstan's attempts to outflank his lines, turning the battle into a frontal clash of shieldwalls. This however robbed the Vikings of their reserves. Finally, after much hard fighting, the stout Saxon shieldwall (well represented by the new side support rules) caused a Viking element to lose heart. The destroyed element left a hole in the center of the Viking line that could not be easily filled. Moving quickly with his bodyguard Olaf was able to cover the hole, but not until another unit in his line gave way.



Constantine finally was able to get his infantry moving forward to drive off the Saxon skirmishers. The collision of shieldwalls was heard across the valley. Part of the Saxon line gave way only to be replaced by the Saxon reserves. Egil and his brother held firm and drove the Scot spearmen back. Unfortunately, disaster struck. Constantine's son, trying to win his father's approval, led the Scot nobles into the thick of the fight. A chance spear caught him in the throat and the hard charging Scot nobles were shattered. Constantine and his guard raced to recover his son's body and stop further rout.



The Vikings were oblivious to these events as they were trying to preserve their army. Stretched thin in all areas, the exhausted Vikings gave way. The fate of the Allies was now on Constantine's army alone.

Heavy casualties on Edward's command gave the Allies some hope of reversing the course of the battle. One final wild Scot charge could even the battle by breaking the Saxon command. Edward's army however was made of stronger stuff. The final Scot charge did break one element of the shieldwall at the expense of Constantine being surrounded and his bodyguard being routed. The Saxon lesser fyrd also surprisingly put the remaining Strathclyde infantry to flight. Broken, the Allies fled the battlefield.

Victory to Saxons: 12 to 3.

Aftermath:

As like the above refight, Aethelstan's historical victory at Brunanburh secured the rule of the English by the English. No longer did the split of Britons vs Saxons or Mercia vs Wessex exist. One king and one people now stood united against the foreign invader.

Sources:

Michael Livingstone, [The Battle of Brunanburh...](#) General Editor

Egil's Saga, available on-line from multiple sources.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, available on-line from multiple sources.

Paul Hill's [The Anglo-Saxons at War 800-1066](#)

Bouvines 1214 AD

The Eclipse of the Angevin Empire

'The King put his echelons in formation and they rode forward. You could see among them noblemen, much rich armour and many noble banners. The same was true of the other side, but I must tell you that they did not ride as well as the French, and they became aware of it.'

(Anonymous of Bethune on the array at Bouvines)



(The French column crosses the Marque at Bouvines)

One of the most important British battles in world history The Battle of Bouvines is arguably less well-known than many of the other battles of the Anglo-French wars (perhaps because of the relatively small number of English soldiers actually on the battlefield).

As we shall see, Bouvines signaled a step change in the scope of the Angevin Empire, and the losses in France undoubtedly undermined King John in his relations with the barons – the implications resonate throughout history.

The Historical Background:

As soon as Eleanor of Aquitaine was granted an annulment of her marriage to Louis VII of France, she married Henry of England, Normandy and Anjou (soon to be King Henry II) ... uniting the territory and vast wealth of Aquitaine with Henry's Angevin inheritance.

Rivalries and tension escalated between Eleanor's royal families. Their cold war went hot on a number of occasions and open warfare continued in the reigns of Richard and John (1).



(the King of France and Count of Flanders at Bouvines)

Dynastically outflanking the French, Henry had married his daughter Matilda to Henry the Lion, Welf duke of Saxony and Bavaria, and rival to Frederick Barbarosa for the Imperial crown. Their son Otto was brought up at the English court and, becoming Holy Roman Emperor in 1209, Otto conspired with his uncle, King John, in a military strangulation of the French kingdom.



(the battlefield of Bouvines today)

The 1214 campaign...

Following the Earl of Salisbury's tremendous victory over the French fleet the previous year at Damme, John planned to attack northeast from Poitou towards Paris, and Otto – supported by his Low Countries allies, by a contingent under the Earl of Salisbury and by John's money – would attack South-West out of Flanders.

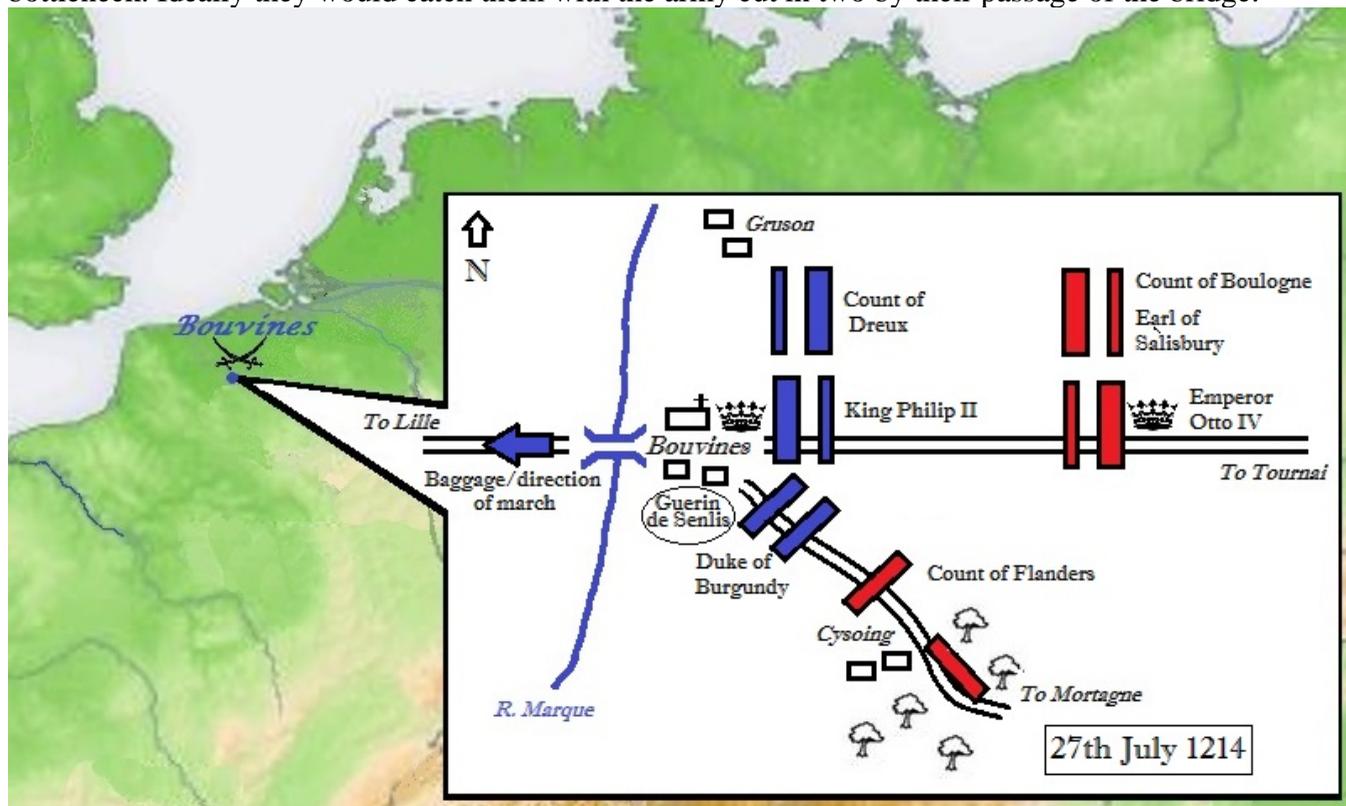
It was hoped this two-pronged attack would reverse the losses of the previous decade.

Although initially successful, the campaigns were badly coordinated and John's thrust faltered early in July at Roche au Moine. Some 3 weeks before Otto succeeded in concentrating his allied force at Valenciennes, the English king retreated.

King of France, Philip II, had mustered a sizeable force and was now free to go on the offensive against Otto's coalition. But if anything, Philip's thrust was too vigorous. Reaching Tournai in notable time, he had almost bypassed the allies (who were by then to his South, a few miles away at Mortagne).

Hard upon the enemy but advised to seek better cavalry country, and perhaps wishing to avoid having to fight on Sunday, Philip attempted to fall back on Lille via the bridge over the marshy river Marque at Bouvines.

In their own council of war, and aware of Philip's intentions, the allies resolved to intercept the French at the bottleneck. Ideally they would catch them with the army cut in two by their passage of the bridge.



The allied van under the Count of Flanders sped up the old wooded road from Mortagne as Philip fell back along the main route from Tournai. Engagements began when lead elements from the Count's flying column ran into screening troops under the Duke of Burgundy.

The French army was coordinated by Crusades veteran Guerin, bishop elect of Senlis, who was actively involved in the successful rear guard skirmishes. Verbruggen suggests that his experience in the Holy Land would have fitted him well to the task of conducting a safe and orderly movement in the face of the enemy. Philip later made Guerin Chancellor of France.

Fighting the Battle:

Bouvines was an unusual encounter battle with both sides deploying as effectively as they could behind/alongside a contact engagement in which the Flemish units literally ran into the French. The French deployed for battle whilst feeding in more troops against the Flemings to buy time.

I suspect the main army arrived by the same road as the French ... either way, the two armies spread North across the open country between the road at Cysoing and the hamlet of Gruson.

The battlefield terrain is fairly simple: a flat open plain between the settlements of Cysoing and Gruson. The Southern access is up the wooded road that emerges at Cysoing. The river Marque is the French baseline, Bouvines with its bridge is treated as the French camp.



The battlefield is all good going and roads other than the wooded area, 2 hamlets and the camp.

The battle starts with the count of Flanders trying to deploy off the Cysoing road in the face of French opposition. Here the front lines are separated by 4 base widths. The rest of the commands of both sides are spreading across the battlefield. The French will move first.

I have assumed army sizes per Verbruggen pp 242-247, French knights 1200-1300, foot 5-6,000 (R - 490/?; C - 175/2150; L - 275/?; unaccounted knights 135) ... Allies ... 1200 or so knights under Ferdinand of Flanders + Otto 3,500 foot and 175 knights, + Dammartin & Salisbury 1,500 foot and 175 knights (+ 2,500 rearguard of foot behind the army)

Reading the contemporary accounts, it is tempting to see Bouvines just as a knightly melee and consider the infantry (who only seem to have played a small part) as best depicted as hordes ... However, there are some clues that we can expand upon. In describing the opening engagements, the Anonymous describes the French rearguard turning their archers round to shoot the assailants off. So, we will need to allocate Burgundy's force some Bowmen to support the cavalry ...

The sources are also clear that the initial French counterattacks mounted to stop the progress of the count of Flanders were made by sergeants/light cavalry alone so it would be appropriate for this battle to split down elements of Knights 'and sergeants ... assumed to be included' into Kn (the fully armoured men) and some Cv (the lighter armed retainers).

Dammartin's infantry on the Imperial right are described as equipped with lances longer than the knight's shorter weapons, so we may presume these to spears or pikes. There are also two-handed axes employed. Salisbury's troops are described as English knights and as mercenaries. Given the Angevin preference for hiring crossbowmen, we might see the English a mix of Knights and CB foot.

And William the Breton (Prose) mentions 700 foot sergeants from Brabant in Otto's host formed into a wall - so we might best allocate some spearmen among the Hordes in the Emperor's host.

ORDER OF BATTLE:

French ... built around 3x IV/4(b)

1 x General (3Kn), 3 x knights (3Kn), 2 x communal militia (Sp), 2 x feudal spearmen (Sp) or Low Countries mercenaries (4Pk), 1 x mercenaries (3Kn or 4Cb), 2 x archers (3Bw or Ps), 1 x bidet, bidower or Breton javelinmen (Ps) or peasant levies (7Hd) or ribauds (5Hd) or Frisian sailors (3Pk) or dardiars (4Ax) or stone-throwers or springalds (Art).

French Army: Bishop Guerin of Senlis (*can roll all three Pip dice and allocate as he chooses*)

Camp: the village of Bouvines and its vital bridge

Vanward: Duke of Burgundy; Breakpoint 4

1x 3Kn Gen

4x 3Kn

3x Cv

4x 3Bw

Mainward: Philip Count of Dreux; Breakpoint 4

1x 3Kn Gen

3x 3Kn

4x Sp

4x 7Hd

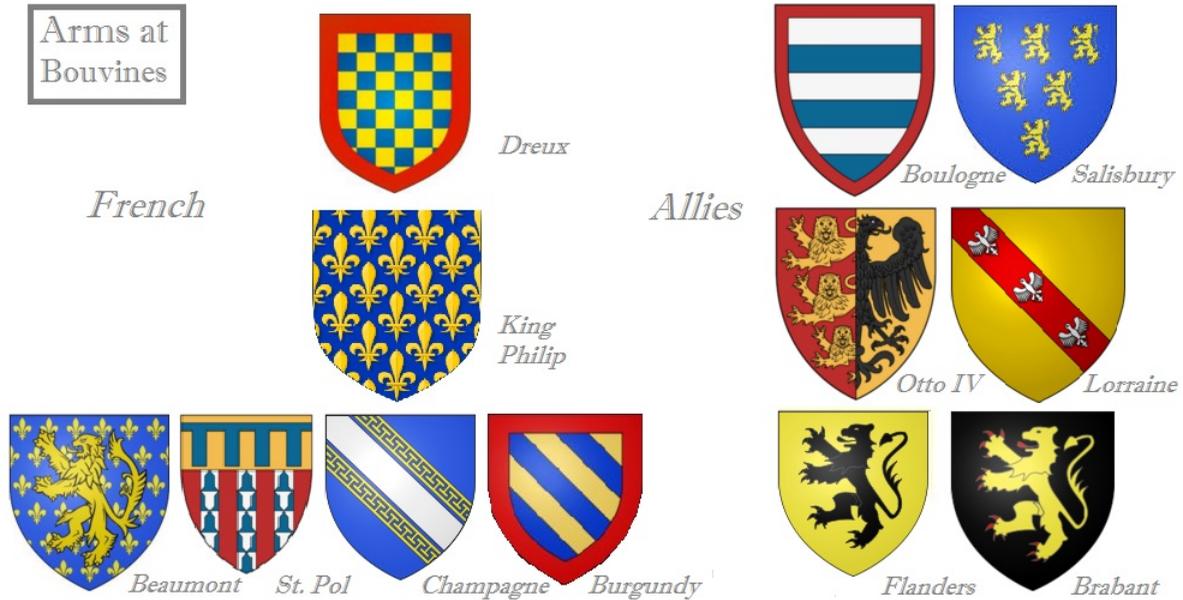
Rearward: Philip II King of France; Breakpoint 4

1x 3Kn Gen

3x 3Kn

8x Sp

Arms at
Bouvines



Allies ... built around 3x IV/13(b)

1 x General (3Kn), 3 x knights (3Kn), 1 x mercenary knights (3Kn) or Hungarian horse archers (LH) or Teutonic knights (6Kn) or crossbow cavalry (Cv), 1 x crossbowmen (4Cb), 2 x Feudal retainers (7Hd) or city militia spearmen (Sp), 2 x heerban with glaive or goedendag or mercenaries with axe or 2-handed sword or halberd (4Bd), or Brabanter pikemen (4Pk), 2 x archers (Ps).

Contemporary accounts describe Otto as raising a dragon windsock standard attopped by an Imperial Eagle in a golden chariot or cart, and fighting in the vicinity of it until making his escape from the battlefield. It seems correct to make the allied C-in-C's element a CWg

Allied Army; All Commands Breakpoint 4

Vanward: Ferdinand Count of Flanders (*deploying from column on the Cysoing Road*)

1x 3Kn Gen

9x 3Kn

2x Ps

Mainward: Renaud de Dammartin Count of Boulogne, William Longspee Earl of Salisbury

1x 3Kn Gen

1x 3Kn

4x 4Pk

1x 4Bd

1 x Ps with allied English: 2x 3Kn, 2 x4 Cb

Rearward: Emperor Otto IV of Welf

1xCWg (*Otto + battle standard cart*)

3x 4Kn

4x 7Hd

2x Sp

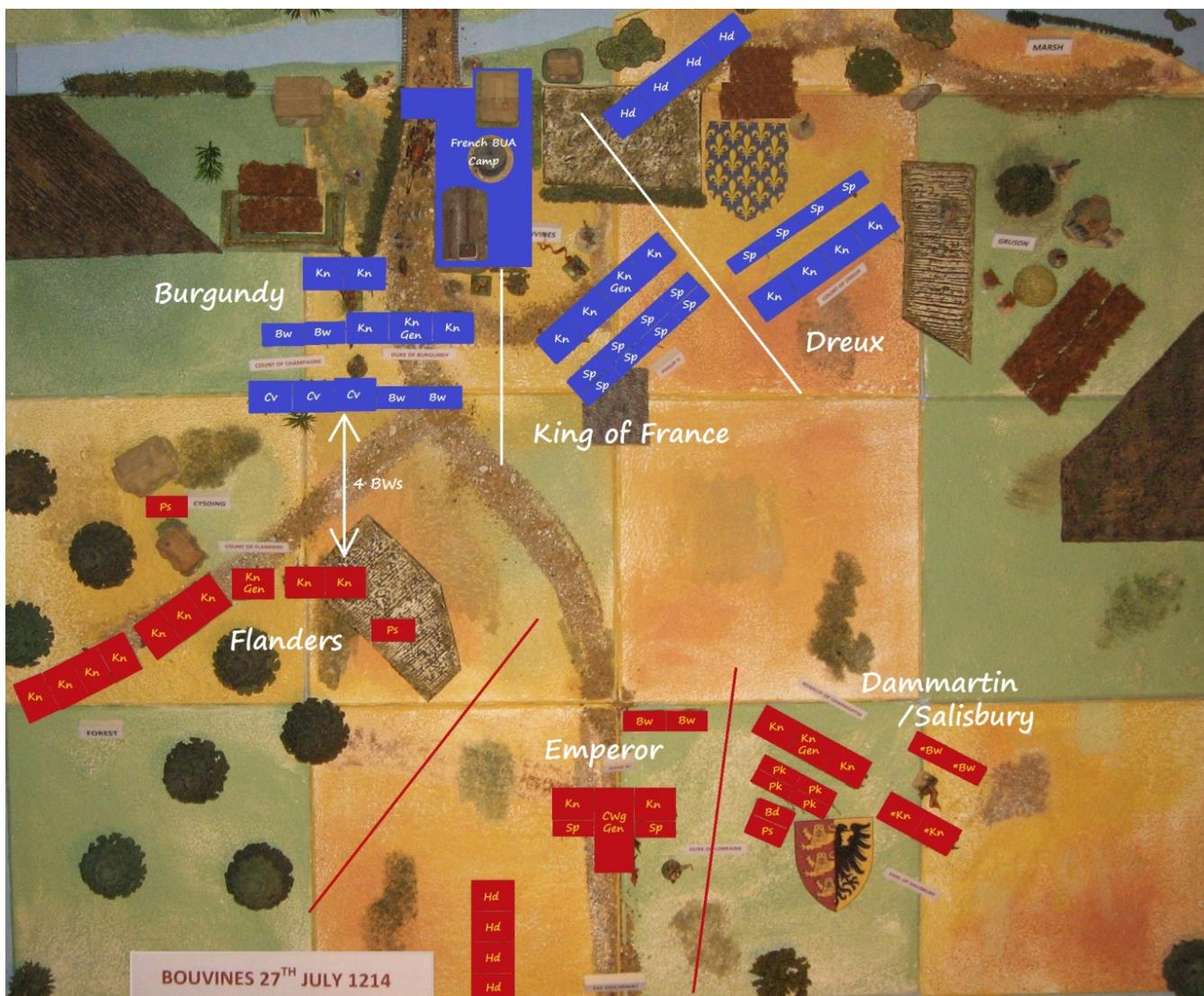
2x 4Cb



Otto and the Imperial war standard



The Count of Flanders at Cysoing



(Deployments)

The allied army has no on table camp.

The Game:

One of the features of the battle is the forced march of Ferdinand Count of Flanders up a short cut to Bouvines via Cysoing. The forced marchers ran into the French rearguard under the Duke of Burgundy in what became the opening phase of the battle. DBA deals with this deployment from a road particularly well, but players should be reminded that the front element of a column (more than 2 deep) has no recoil so the count of Flanders will need to take heed.

Sources discuss Renaud de Dammartin's skilful retirement into the protection of his infantry and players will find this will work in V3 of DBA if the foot are kept close behind.

This scenario was played with members of the public and some seasoned players at The Other Partizan in Newark, September 2015. We ran the battle through twice, in the morning amongst the usual suspects, in the afternoon as a full 6 command, 6 player participation game. As in the historical battle, the outcome was far from certain for some time.



(the Bouvines game at The Other Partizan, courtesy of The Society of Ancients)

Although the deployments followed what we know of the historical battle (*so were mandatory*) the scenario clearly allowed quite a lot of flexibility as the two games developed along very different lines - the second game, producing a generalised melee right across the battlefield, probably taking a more historical shape.

In game one, following a very historical approach, Ferdinand count of Flanders opted to try to punch his way through the French right wing before a bad situation got any worse. Low die rolling combined with the scenario handicap to demoralise the Flemish very quickly, and the Burgundian knights then flooded into the centre of the battlefield against the Emperor's battle.



The Count of Dreux's battle engaged much more cautiously, worried about exposing its flank to the longer Allied right, and keen to get his somewhat dubious reserves of infantry into the engagement. This allowed Dammartin and Salisbury to divert some of their force into the centre to support the Emperor.

With his flank exposed, and outnumbered, the King's command succumbed next through weight of casualties. This proved the French undoing.

In the second game, the Duke of Burgundy started the defense by sending forward his bowmen and caused some early reverses. Pre-emptive attacks with cavalry were less successful however – and the support of the knights was quickly needed.



The French were pushed back onto the outskirts of Bouvines – but without actual losses. Although generally winning and pressing forwards, the count of Flanders lost elements in the process and became demoralised before being able to inflict a telling blow.

Across the main battle, the commanders pressed forward aggressively and a battle of attrition was played out with neither side breaking through. Almost following the historical narrative, the decision came around the person of the Emperor himself ... In the heat of the action and overlapped by the King's infantry, the CWg was doubled in hand-to-hand combat. Otto then applied his once only 'post calculation' C-in-C +1 to save the situation.

It was unfortunately the allied turn, so no repairs could be made to the unequal combat and a (seemingly inevitable) further low combat roll repeated the loss of the CWg. Of course, there was no second chance and so the outcome stood. We had gathered a small audience by this stage and a cheer went up – it was an exciting climax as the 2-element loss was sufficient to end the game in a French victory.

I could scarcely have worked this game better had I scripted it.



The chariot on which the standard was resting was destroyed, the dragon broken and the golden eagle, its wings torn off and in pieces, brought to the King. Thus was Otto's battalion completely destroyed after he ran away.

(William the Breton)

Aftermath:

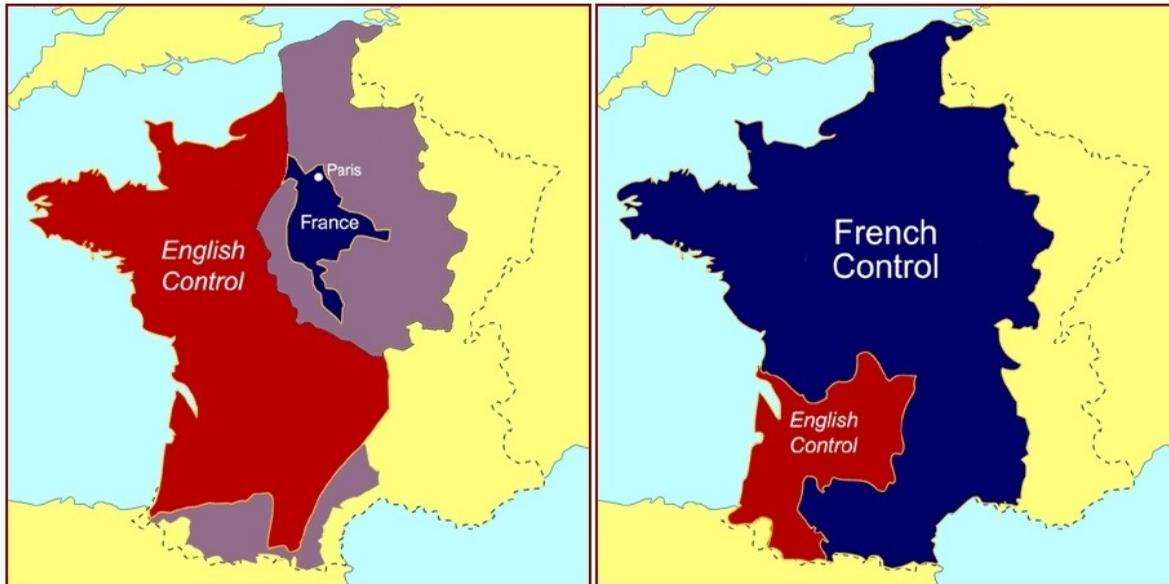
We concluded that although his element was destroyed, Otto may well have escaped the field (this is something players may like to dice for in the wrap up phase of their games – should the allies lose)

The Importance of Bouvines ...

Victory at Bouvines also freed up the French from Imperial threats, allowing Prince Louis to be sent into England in support of the baron's revolt in 1216, fatally damaging King John's cause.

Without Bouvines it is hard to see events pushing John to accept the terms of Magna Carta.

For France, of course, Bouvines and the expansion of territory can be seen as the beginnings of the country as we know it today ... while on the other side of Europe and in the Mediterranean it also changed the course of history (effectively seeing the Hohenstauffen's re-established on the Imperial throne, fuelling the Gueff-Ghibelline struggle for the next century – and ultimately drawing the French into Italy) ...



France before and after the battle of Bouvines

(1) Richard built Chateau Gaillard in 1196, and renounced Angevin claims in the Languedoc in order to bring Raymond Count of Toulouse into the alliance. Meanwhile he drew Baldwin count of Flanders to attack Philip's possessions from the North. Philippe de Dreux, bishop of Beauvais (cousin of King Philip) was captured - a great warrior bishop, he would later fight at Bouvines. Richard won notable victories and a favourable truce at Vernon (1198) but was killed at the siege of Chalus-Chabrol in 1199 before he had completed his campaigns.

Chateau Gaillard fell in March 1204 but in the new campaign William Longspee won a resounding naval victory off the coast of Flanders at Damme (30-31 May 1213) ...

References:

The original sources can be found in G Duby, *The Legend of Bouvines* (1990) ...

You can find the sources online at <http://deremilitari.org/2014/03/the-battle-of-bouvines-1214/>

The traditional classics are Ferdinand Lot and Sir Charles Oman although these have largely been superseded by Jan Verbruggen ('The Art of Warfare in Western Europe') 1997 edition, Kelly DeVries (various) and John France ('Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades 1000-1300') 1999. Ian Heath's WRG volume 'Armies of Feudal Europe' (1999 edition) remains a key guide to how the soldiers would have looked.

Verneuil August 17, 1424 AD

A Second Agincourt

“I, the author of this work, had never seen a fairer company nor one where there were so many of the nobility as there was there, nor set in better order, nor showing greater appearance of a desire to fight.”

Jehan De Wavrin (eyewitness)



The Historical Background:

By blood and fire, Henry V had won both the English and French crowns for his infant son, Henry VI. But two years after Henry V's death, the disinherited Charles VII still pressed his Valois claim to the French throne from his remaining strongholds in the south of France. To enforce the young Henry's rights in France, his uncle, John the Duke of Bedford, now regent in France, waged a relentless war upon those French unwilling to accept his nephew's claim,

Despite a recent defeat at the battle of Cravant, Charles had managed to recruit a mighty Scottish army allegedly consisting of two thousand men-at-arms, six thousand archers and two thousand axe wielding Highlanders. Charles had also called out the feudal levy from all those areas still loyal to the Valois. Besides these forces Charles engaged several contingents of mercenaries including a body of men-at-arms from Lombard sporting the latest Milanese armor (allegedly the best in Europe) and riding fully armored horses.

Jean d'Harcourt, Count of Aumale had suggested Charles employ the heavy horse after Jean had used a small contingent to win a victory at the battle of La Gravelle the year before. The armored horses and stout Milanese suits of armor had seemed to negate the English arrows. Jean now proposed using the same tactics on a much larger scale. Heeding the count's advice, Charles hired a large force (perhaps 2000) and now anxiously awaited their arrival.

It was a delay in the arrival of dread Lombard horse though that caused the French to renege on a promise to meet the English in battle outside the city of Ivery, which John the Duke of Bedford was besieging. Instead the French had some Scots in their employ ride to Verneuil and, pretending to be defeated English troops,

convince the town that all was lost to trick it into surrendering. Enraged by this breach of chivalry and *rue de guerre*, Bedford marched his army to Verneuil to force the French into battle. Alarmed by the size of the combined French and Scottish armies several prominent “false-French” Norman and Picardian knights deserted Bedford during the march and joined the French army. Fearing further treachery, Bedford then dismissed a 500-man contingent of the increasingly unreliable allies.

This was grand martial theater similar to that attributed to Henry V at Agincourt by Shakespeare where he has his hero king proclaim: “He that hath no stomach for this feast let him depart...for we would not die in that man’s company who fears his fellowship to die with us”. Now facing an army of at least 14,000, across a flat featureless plain, ideal for heavy horse, Bedford had but 1800 men at arms and 8000 yeoman archers left. But he had absolute faith in his happy few.

The sources generally agree on the English deployment: men at arms in the center, archers on the wings, and all dismounted. Only the French chronicler Enguerrand de Monstrelet suggests that some archers may have been deployed in front of the men at arms but even he agrees that their main strength was on the wings. Bedford did not seem to intermix blocks of archers with men at arms as did Henry V and Edward III, a decision that nearly cost the English the battle. Given the flat open terrain with no flank protection, Bedford did anticipate that the French might well flank or even breakthrough the English line so he kept a body of perhaps 2000 archers (at least 200 of which remained mounted) as a reserve. He further fortified his camp by surrounding it by a mass of horses ridden by pages.

The deployment of the French has generated much recent controversy. Prior historians, such as Charles Oman and A.H. Brune, have placed the heavily armored Lombards and some mounted Gascons under La Hire on the flanks of the French battle line. More recent historians, such as Michael Jones, have reinterpreted the evidence and now place at least the Lombards in front of the French battle line directly facing the English and believe the heavy horse broke clean through the center of Bedford’s line.

No one disputes that either by going around or by breaking through, the Lombards got past the English line and reached the “horse fort” around the English camp. Here they seem to have driven off a body of camp guards, either the pages of the horse fort or a reserve of mounted archers. At least part of Lombard force was driven off by the rest of the reserve English archers while the remainder engaged in a pointless pursuit of the less stalwart members of the English reserve.

What all historians have missed is a critical line in Jehan De Wavrin’s eyewitness account regarding the archery duel between the Scottish and English archers: “the archers of England and the Scots who were with the French began to shoot one against the other so murderously that it was a horror to look upon, for they carried death to those whom they struck with full force”. What seems most likely is that the Lombards and Gascons deployed opposite the English men at arms and were supported by the Scottish archers. Since Bedford had not placed any archers among the men at arms, all shooting at the heavily armored Lombards in the center would have been at fairly long range by yeoman also dueling the Scottish archers. Just as the historian Michael Jones argues at least part of the Lombard charge broke through the center of the English line knocking the men at arms aside (as French knights would again at the battle of Patay in 1429) and thundered into the English rear.

The Lombard charge had broken the English line in. In this supreme moment of crises, Bedford did the only thing he could – attack. With trumpets blaring Bedford ordered his banners to advance, seeing this Salisbury, Bedford’s commander on the opposite wing, also sounded the advance. The French noting the shattering of the English center hurried forward to meet the English before they could recover. It’s not clear

whether the young Duke of Alencon, in nominal command, or the experienced Jean d'Harcourt, in actual command, gave this order. But either way it set the two armies on a collision course.

All sources agree that the French began to fall into disorder as they advanced on the English. Most authorities attribute this to superior English discipline but it seems likely that the English brought forward their remaining archers, who shooting as they advanced, caused parts of the French line to falter. In any case the two armies eventually collided and dissolved into savage hand to hand combat.

The ensuing fighting shocked even the battle wise Wavrin who called it "pitiable and deadly battle [where] mercy had no place". It went on for a full 45 minutes "...without being able to perceive to whom the loss or victory would turn, the two parties fought with all their might". By now both English commanders were in the thick of the fighting, Wavrin saw "that [Salisbury] wavered greatly and had very much to do to maintain his position". Wavrin heard later that Bedford "was very greatly harassed...in so much that no one knew not what to think nor to imagine how the affair would terminate". At one point Bedford's banner went down and the English faltered but a Norman knight, Jean de Saane, plunged into the French line and won it back. Even so French numbers began to tell and all seemed lost; Salisbury, beset by foes, pledged to go on Crusade if only God would spare him.

But at that moment the desperate English heard a great "haloo", the unmistakable battle cry of the English yeoman. Wavrin relates what happened: "[T]wo thousand English archers, who as was said had repulsed the French cavalry...when they saw their enemies flee, gathered strength, and were a great cause of the victory; for seeing the conflict so decided, they fresh and new as they were, raised a wonderful shout, came wheeling round and put themselves in front before their army, where at their coming they began to inflict great chastisement on the French, who were much wearied with fighting, wherefore, much amazed at this new incident, they began a little to lose heart and to fall back; and on the contrary the English seeing that now was the time for it, exerted themselves, all at once recovering strength and fought so well that in many places they broke through the line of the French..."

Historian Michael Jones thinks Wavrin was mistaken and these were wing archers of Bedford's line returning to the battle. This seems unlikely as it would require Bedford to advance on, and fight for 45 minutes, a French force of over 10,000 foot with a few hundred men at arms. Another source specifically states that the wing archers "joined the column of the Duke of Bedford where they rallied." Much more likely Bedford and Salisbury advanced with their entire force including the wing archers. Even so it was a desperate gamble (each English battle would have had at most 900 men at arms and 3000 archers). Wavrin is probably correct that the reserve first drove off any Lombards that had broken through and then, while the French main body was fixed by the desperate English counter attack, moved round to strike the French battle in the flank.

How this strike was executed is another controversial matter. Some historians, such as Burne, believe they shot into the French flank, other like Matthew Strickland believe they plunged in and fought hand to hand. Certainly by this point the wing archers were fighting at close quarters – as English yeoman had been doing for over 50 years. Historian/reinactor Mike Loades offers the best explanation proposing that the yeoman continued to use their warbows even in the thick of the fighting while shielded by a front rank of men at arms or in this case by archers fighting with sword and buckler.

However executed, the strike by the archers turned a close battle into a terrible killing field. The English, perhaps because of the various breaches of chivalry by the combined French/Scottish army (besides the treachery at Verneuil, the Scottish commander, the Earl of Douglas, had personally pledged fealty to Henry V only to ignore his vow and lead a Scottish army against the English despite a truce being declared between

the two nations) or perhaps simply due to blood lust brought on by the brutal close fighting, now set upon their enemies with merciless fury. In scenes, thankfully unimaginable to the modern mind, the English hacked to death any foe regardless of rank. Despite the normal medieval convention of offering ransom Wavrin reports the English took a mere 200 prisoners against 6000 slain (including both commanders - Douglas and Harcourt). Wavrin also gives the enormous figure of 1600 dead for the victorious English. This is the exact same figure he claims for English casualties at Agincourt, a far higher number than in any other source. Both figures are probably too high (Bedford in a letter after the battle insisted he lost only a handful of men).

Whatever the final casualty totals all sides agree that Bedford had won a crushing victory. With the destruction of the last great Scottish army and the scattering of Charles VII's feudal allies, the initiative passed to the English and would not be relinquished until the coming of Joan d'Arc.

Fighting the Battle:

The great divergence of opinion among historians regarding how the battle played out presents some difficulties in recreating both the orders of battle and initial dispositions. While historians can be content to present alternative explanations, a scenario designer must in the end reach a final conclusion. The ones proposed here represent best guesses drawn from the surviving primary sources with every effort to pick those that give the most interesting and balanced battle.

I suggest using the excellent new line of plastic figures produced by the Perry Brothers which cover the English army from Agincourt to Orleans. Many of the men at arms in this set can also serve as French supplemented by either the Perry Brother's earlier line of metal figures for this time period or the Essex line covering the same time frame. For the Lombard's wearing Milanese armor I used the Perry Brother's mounted men at arms set for the War of the Roses. Use the more rounded "Italian" style armor to represent the state of the art (in 1424) Milanese armor of the Lombards.

As English men at arms and archers had been working together in retinues for at least 50 years prior to this battle they should be mounted on the same depth of base to insure equal recoil distances. For 25mm figures use either 20mm or 30mm depth for all elements in the English army (except the Mounted Archers).

Orders of Battle:

For both armies I have chosen a rough 1 element = 500 men ratio and divided each into two commands.

English (based on V/62d 100 Year's War English)

Defender – set up first, move first.

Wavrin claims that Bedford had assembled a force of 1800 men at arms and 8000 archers drawn both from England and nominally loyal areas in Normandy. No source gives any information regarding the structure of the English army. Michael Jones believes Bedford intended to form only one single battle but the breakthrough by the Lombards forced the English to operate as two separate battles. To keep it simple, I have just divided the English into roughly two equal halves.

Bedford's Battle (Total Elements: 11; Break: 4)

1x Duke Bedford & retinue (4Bd /CIC)

1x English/Norman Men at Arms (4Bd)

6x English Archers (4Lb);

The Reserve (counting as part of Bedford's Battle)

1x Mounted Archer (Mtd-4Lb)

2x Reserve Archers (4Lb)

Salisbury's Battle (Total Elements: 8; Break: 3)

1x Salisbury & retinue (4Bd /Gen)

1x English/Norman Men at Arms (4Bd)

6x English Archers (4Lb)

French/Scots (based on IV/64 Medieval French)

Invader – set up second move second.

The numbers of the French/Scotts were estimated by Bedford at 14,000. Most modern authorities accept Bedford's estimate as reasonable. Historian B.G.H. Ditcham believes the Scottish contingent had dwindled to no more than 6500 by the time of the battle due to detachments and attrition. The sources vary on the number of Lombards actually recruited for the battle from 500-2000, I've used the higher end of the estimate due to their apparent impact on the battle but have made them an ally since the French seem to have lost control of them during the battle. This leaves 6000 men to form the French feudal levy which Charles had raised from those areas of France still loyal to him and additional troops drawn from Italy and Spain. French armies of the period were generally about one third men at arms, one third town militia and one third missile men.

Alcenon's Battle (Total Elements: 15; Break: 5)

1x Duke of Alcenon & retinue (4Bd /CIC) (actually lead by Jean d'Harcourt, Count of Aumale)

1x l'Hire & his French knights on barded horses (3Kn)

2x French men at arms (4Bd)

2x Town & Feudal militia Pavisers (Sp)

2x Town & Feudal militia Volugiers (4Bd)

3x French/Italian Heavy Crossbowmen (4Cb)

1x Spanish skirmishers (Ps)

Lombard Ally (count as part of Alcenon's Battle)

3x Lombard men at arms on barded horses (Kn).

Scottish Battle (Total Elements: 12; Break: 4)

1x Douglas & retinue (4Bd/Gen)

1x Scottish men at arms (4Bd)

2x Highland axmen (3Bd)

8x Scottish archers (3Lb)

Deployment:

The English should deploy in two side by side battles at least 3BW from the center edge with no elements in the woods. All archers should be placed on the wing of each battle with the two men at arms elements placed in the center. Elements identified as part of the Reserve must set up with at least one element in the Camp and all other Reserve elements with one full edge in contact with the Camp.

The French should deploy with all Knights placed exactly 3BW from the center edge. The remainder of the French/Scottish army should deploy in a second rank at least 4BW from the center edge. See Map.

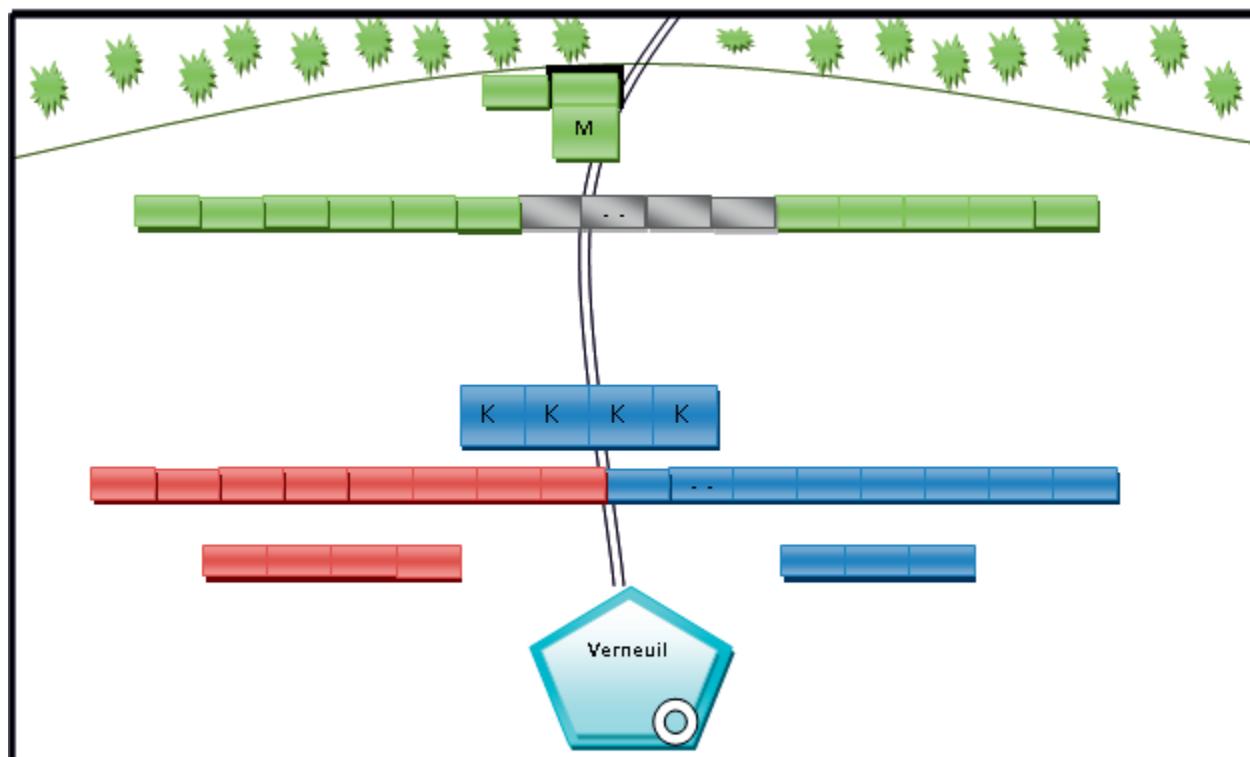
Map & Terrain:

The battlefield of Verneuil was essentially a large featureless plain. The English deployed in front of a wood in order to protect their rear. Likewise, the French deployed in front of the stream which meanders by the walled city of Verneuil. After the rout of the French/Scottish army many became trapped at the bridge leading into the city which refused to open its gates to the fugitives.

No doubt many cultivated fields also surrounded the city which would count as Plough in DBA terms. Feel free to add them for scenic effect though the PIP scores in the actual battle did not bring rain so they should remain Good Going (unless you wish to fight an alternative version of the battle). The battle can be played on a standard 6'X4' table in 25mm or 5'X3' in 15mm.

On the Map English archers are represented as green (M = Mounted Archer) and English men at arms as grey. French/Lombard Knights are Blue and marked with a "K". The rest of the French battle is in blue and the Scottish battle is in red.

In general you want to keep the battlefield as open as possible so I suggest limiting the woods behind the English and the stream/walled town behind the French to about 2 BW.



Special Rules:

- 1) To reflect the "horse" barrier created around the English Camp give the Camp a +3 CF.
- 2) By this date in the Hundred Years War English archers had acquired both armor and close fighting skills making them, in historian Matthew Strickland's words, "universal soldiers". To reflect this ability, give all English archers a CF of +3 against Foot (like Shooters in Hordes of the Things).
- 3) Similarly, crossbowmen had steady increased in both armor and the power of their weapons. While gaining in power the crossbows now had to be drawn by mechanical devices and cranks, further slowing their effective rate of shooting. To reflect these changes, troops identified as "Heavy Crossbows" have a CF of +3 against t Foot but shoot only in their own bound.
- 4) Verneuil saw the first large scale use of metal horse barding to counter the effect of missile weapons though smaller scale use of barding had been tried at Poitiers and Agincourt. To reflect the effect of barding, Mounted Elements identified as "barded" count as a Foot target against Distance Shooting (but not in Close Combat).

Special Rules 2-4 (the "Medieval Package") can be applied to most European medieval battles occurring after 1300.

The Game:

After reviewing the dispositions, the French commander decided to take the calculated risk to give the high command die to the fast Scots rather than the more numerous French and Lombard battle. More conventionally, the English gave the high die to Bedford's more numerous command.

The English taking the first bound immediately began to redeploy archers to the center and bring up reserve archers to face the massed French/Lombard knights. The subsequent English shooting managed to at least break up the first French wave. On their initial bound the French decided to reorganize the Lombards instead of charging and to bring up both their heavy crossbows and swift Scottish archers on the flanks. This set off a lengthy archery duel with the English slowly gaining the upper hand.



Despite the storm of Scottish arrows and French bolts the English managed to keep an archer or two shooting at the Lombards and beset by PIP shortages this kept them from launching a coordinated attack. Growing impatient the French and Scottish men at arms, lead by the swift highlanders, moved around the stalled knights and began advancing on the English line.



Beset by French militia spears and Scottish axes the yeoman archers began to give way. The English commanders soon became islands of resistance in a sea of advancing foes. Briefly the arrival of the reserve archers seemed to stem the tide, their arrows tearing red gaps in the Scottish line. The Earl of Douglas had to fight his way out of a seemingly certain death flank attack.



Redoubling their efforts though the inexorable French and Scottish waves finally washed over first Salisbury and then Bedford. With the death of their commanders the rest of the English army melted away.



As in the real battle both sides hopes seemed to wax and wane with each die roll. The French and Scottish battles were but a single element from themselves succumbing before they felled the English commanders.

Final Thoughts:

An interesting battle that pits a varied combined arms force against a more homogenous but stout opponent. The French have a huge variety of troop types and can create some real matchup headaches for the English but such a complex army, including an ally, is difficult to manage and coordinate especially with English arrows harassing your line. The English on the other hand need to maximize shooting and try and keep the French at arms length long enough to fatally thin their line. Once the clash comes the English must attempt to hang together, men at arms supporting the yeoman, as the side support rule is essential to keeping the archers in the fight.

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Enguingatte August 7th, 1479 AD

The Dawn of Modern Warfare

“Dux Maximilius cum picariis fortiter instabat,

Ut equitatus Francorum, qui ab utraque parte cum allis suis obpugnare quarebat eundem,

non posset in eum praevalere.” –Adrien De But from his Chronicles of the years 1468-1487. (The Duke Maximilian stood strongly with his pikemen, so when the French knights attacked him with their allies, they could not prevail.)



The Historical Background:

The death of Charles of Burgundy at the hands of the Swiss sent shock waves through the medieval world. The old order seemed to have passed with him. Mary, his daughter and heir was being held hostage by her own subjects in Flanders. Emboldened by the Swiss victories over her father they had imprisoned her. Forced to concede power and authority while witnessing the murder of her two closest advisers to the rebellious towns of the Low Countries, she rebuffed an offer of marriage to the young son of the King of France in favor of a marriage to Maximilian of Austria.

Louis the XI, King of France, was incensed by the rebuff and chose to secure Burgundian land by force under the pretense of Sallic law. Mary's new husband of choice, the young Maximilian of Austria was immediately confronted with dealing with both rebellious commoners and the machinations of the King of France. Luckily for the newly weds, the towns of the Low Countries were frightened by Louis and the coming French campaign. Rallying to Maximilian, they restored Mary to freedom.

Countering the offensive launched by the French crown under Philippe de Crèveœur, known as the Lord des Cordes, Maximilian assembled his forces in Artois and besieged the border town of Therouanne. Maximilian being only 20 years old looked for experienced commanders to help him. He found two in Count Engelbert of Nassau and Jacques of Savoy, Count of Romont. Both had served under Charles and fought at the Battle of Nancy. Seeing the power of the Swiss phalanx first hand they argued strongly for Maximilian to call upon

his Low Country troops and organize them in a similar matter. The cities of the Low Countries responded by providing 11,000 men under John Dadizeele, the bailiff of Ghent and captain general of Flanders.

The pike armed infantry of the Low Countries had a mixed record. Triumph at Courtray in 1312 was overshadowed by a disastrous defeat at Roosebeke in 1382. During the 100 Years War alliances shifted between both France and England, often splitting the towns and principalities. One theme however emerges. Unlike the Swiss, the pikemen of the Low Countries didn't have the confidence to sustain an aggressive attack. Maximilian would address this issue by dismounting and taking pike in hand to fight with his recently rebellious subjects.

The Lord des Cordes marched to Therouanne to break the siege with a French army consisting mainly of men at arms and Franc Archers- the French copy of the dreaded English longbowman. Maximilian pulled his army from the siege and met the French in open battle.

Fighting the Battle:

Unlike most ancient battles, Enguingatte has many surviving primary sources documenting the battle. These sources are well varied as to their political allegiance and nationality. Unfortunately, none of them come close to agreeing on the course of the campaign, the order of battle, or even the exact events of the battle. Even Maximilian's memoirs dictated in 1514, the "Der Weißkunig", contain multiple reports of the battle that are difficult to harmonize and in German historian Ernst Richert's opinion, "seem to originate from different authors". Attempts to calculate the army sizes back from casualty reports fall upon a similar fate. Wild variances produce meaningless guesses, with some casualty figures listed as higher than the total number of combatants from other sources. We do however have some pieces of information that seem to agree. The first is that the army Maximilian assembled outnumbered the French army by a small amount. The second is the number of men provided by the Low Countries. While there is some variation, the number of 11,000 is common in the sources. Finally, the French knights and mounted men at arms outnumbered the Burgundian/German forces by a factor of at least two to one.

Using the most common number for the forces involved, one could guess about 13,000 for the French forces directly attacking the Burgundian/German army. Since the French were moving to relieve Maximilian's siege on the town of Therouanne, we should include the town's garrison. According to sources, it hosted a garrison from 1000-4000 men and made a sortie against Maximilian's camp. Taking a middle number of 2000 gives the French roughly 15,000 men, which fits nicely into a triple sized DBA army. This army was knight heavy, but also contained a very large number of Franc Archers as its basic infantry component. As most narratives of the battle give different stories for the flanks and the center forces, we will divide the French army into the traditional three "battles" with the knights on the flanks and the Franc Archers making the bulk of the center.

The Burgundian/German forces are more difficult to organize. Using the figure of 18,000 allows for a reinforced big battle DBA order of battle. It also fits well with the 11,000 pikemen figure and number of knights allowed from the French OB (they were outnumbered two to one). The Low Countries pikemen were organized into two groups ("piles"). The Burgundian/German knights were split between the flanks. This would argue the organization of the army into four separate commands. None of the battle narratives, however, seem to award Maximilian's army that much flexibility. To balance commands we find it necessary to portray a certain part of Maximilian's forces as camp guard Horde elements to guard against the inevitable sortie from Therouanne.

Order of Battle:The Burgundian/German Army- (based on IV/85b)

The right wing: 4 Breakpoint

1x 3Kn Gen

3x 3Kn

1x 4Bd (Dismounted Men at Arms)

3x Mtd English Longbowmen

1x Horde (Deployed protecting the camp- out of command distance)

2x Art

The center: 6 Breakpoint

1x 4Pk Gen (Maximilian and Roumont)

15x 4Pk Low Countries Pikemen

2x Hordes (Deployed as guard to the camp)

The left wing: 4 Breakpoint

1x 3Kn Gen

3x 3Kn

3x 4CB

3x Ps (Handgunners)

2x Art

The French Army (based on IV/82a)

The right wing: Breakpoint 4

1x 3Kn Gen

7x 3Kn

1x 4Bd (French Town Volgiers)

3x Art

The center: Breakpoint 5

1x 3Kn Gen

12x 3Bw (The Franc Archers)

1x 4 Bd (Dismounted Knights)

The left wing: Breakpoint 4

1x 3Kn Gen

7x 3Kn

1x 4Bd (French Town Volgiers)

3x Art

The Garrison of Therouanne: (Commanded by the French Center... but not included in their breakpoint)

3x 4Bd (Town guards and dismounted knights)

2x 4Cb (Town crossbowmen).

The Game:

Enguingatte opened with both armies drawn in battle array. Maximilian's right was protected by a marshy, low area defined by a stream (off map to the right). The higher ground to the left consisted of rolling hills with patches of trees that exist to this day. To the rear of the Burgundian/German army across the Lys river is the recently besieged city of Therouanne. The town of Enguingatte is opposite the French camp.



The Franc Archers of the French center are quite numerous and deploy two elements deep to limit their frontage. They are supported by Des Cordes, his entourage, and by a group of dismounted French men at arms.



Across the rolling high ground on the left, the Burgundians setup outside of artillery range. The crossbowmen and artillery lined the crest of the hill to defend against an overwhelming number of French man at arms. The French prepared for the coming artillery duel while their knights hoped to advance and expand their frontage.



The Burgundian right deployed the mounted longbowmen of England in a static position buttressed by their heavily outnumbered knights on their flank. The Burgundian commander deployed to the rear of the bowmen in reserve to immediately counterattack in case of a breakthrough. The French deployed with their guns and knights forward, hoping to win an artillery duel and swiftly envelope the longbowmen.



French commanders were concerned that the low swampy ground to their left would prevent them from using superior numbers. They were also somewhat nervous about advancing their artillery into range and being caught in the flank by the pikemen of the Burgundian center. The short frontage allowed by the terrain would keep them from using their full combat power during the game.

The battle started when the Burgundian left moved into the low ground between the ridges to prevent the more numerous French knights from extending their battle line and overlapping them. Their crossbowmen bravely followed, leaving the relative safety of a defensive hilltop position, daring the charge of the French knights and bombardment of the French artillery. The Burgundian artillery held their position, ready to engage any French artillery moving forward or to support the advancing crossbowmen against a charge by the French knights.



Maximilian's plan was to delay the French flanks as long as possible to allow the Low Countries pikemen to close and destroy the Franc Archers. Using the terrain to prevent the French from extending their lines and bringing more combat power forward unfortunately meant leaving the defensive position provided by the hill on his left flank.

Maximilian and the Count of Romont wasted no time in trying to attack the French center.

The French left attempted to charge into hand-to-hand combat while their artillery planned to engage the Burgundian guns opposite them. Any idea of an artillery duel was delayed when the French switched their aim to Maximilian's swiftly advancing center command. The French knights impetuously moved forward to attack the English mounted longbowmen taking advantage of DBA 3's new rule where knights are not killed in close combat against bow (only on ties in close combat versus Lb and Xb). This will allow the knights possibility of multiple charges against the bowmen. Steady shooting by the archers made a coordinated attack difficult however.



The knights were continually knocked out of formation by the fierce and disciplined shooting. Unable to flank the Burgundian position because of the terrain, the knights struggled to form an unbroken, coordinated attack and began to take the inevitable casualties that sustained bow fire will produce.

Maximilian seeking a quick victory in the center (obviously hearing of the limitations of the Franc Archer) advanced, only to find the powerful French bow will easily penetrate armor and flesh. The stories about French bowmen only being good at killing chickens seem to have been a badly concocted myth. The Burgundian's Pike formation began to lose order and take casualties. Moving forward into the teeth of an arrow storm was expensive in both command pips and in casualties.



The French artillery attempted to support the bow fire from the Franc Archers with their own bombardment, but were hampered by both low pip rolls and a hesitancy to change facing. Turning against the Burgundian center could easily expose the French Artillery's flanks to counter battery fire from the opposing Burgundian guns, as well as dishearten their own command (the French left) that was struggling to close into heavy bow fire against the Burgundian longbowmen. The French artillery were unwilling to concentrate against any one enemy.

With the French left having difficulty closing into combat, the French commanders concentrated efforts on their right. The Burgundians however by leaving their hilltop position to make clever use of the terrain, bottled the French knights up into a narrow frontage on this flank much as they did on the opposite flank. Despite repeated charges, the French knights were unable to use their numerical superiority and made headway only with great difficulty.



Stout shooting from Burgundian crossbow also hampered the French plans. Any attempt by the French knights to expand their right flank's frontage toward the center was met with sustained crossbow fire and heavy casualties. The artillery eyed one another over the small valley.

The French left finally charged the Burgundian line and over ran part of the vaunted English longbowmen. The well-placed Burgundian reserve however launched a strong counterattack, catching the French commander in a trap and killing him. This, coupled with heavy casualties from the English longbow fire, produced confusion in the French ranks, stalled the attack and eventually caused them to lose heart and break.



The supporting French artillery finally turned and engaged the Burgundian center. This poorly timed decision left them unable to advance to bombard the opposing Burgundian guns or to fully support the French left flank knight's ultimately ill-fated charge into the enemy lines.

The French right finally was able to expand and use its greater numbers. A spirited counterattack from the Burgundians met with some success, but quickly became over extended, surrounded and routed. The French at last were having some success.



With the French left defeated but the French right victorious, the game came down to a fight between the center commands. Maximilian struggled to close with the Franc archers. Casualties mounted as Des Cordes attempted to extend his lines and catch the deep pike columns in a fire-trap by shooting into their flanks. Though Bows in DBA 3 are still only +2 versus foot, the extension of range to 3 BW ensures more rounds of shooting before heavy infantry can close. This makes an orderly advance into archers difficult and will eventually produce the heavy casualties that Maximilian experienced.

Fairly poor pip rolls hampered the French. Never able to get the garrison of Therouanne to sally forth, Lord Des Cordes even had difficulty extending his battle line of archers in order to bring more forward. While the French right (the high pip command) always seemed to have a 5 or 6, the mid and low pip commands had consistently low rolls.



Maximilian pike in hand led the Burgundian foot forward to finally crash into the enemy. Bow fire from the Franc Archers forced him to use his CinC +1 to save himself (the Count of Romont taking the arrow which penetrated his left greave).

The Franc archers however, hampered by their deployment and poor pips rolls, were not able to generate enough fire to prevent the pikemen from finally closing. Unable to face the bristling wall of pikes the Franc archers were quickly routed. Des Cordes committed himself directly against Maximilian in a desperate attempt to break the pikemen, but was rebuffed in successive charges.



The French center broke and the battle was lost.

Aftermath:

The game was surprisingly close, much like the actual battle. Historically, a charge of French knights broke one of Maximilian's flanks quickly and overran some of his artillery. Forced to the defensive with part of his pikemen, he was unable to bring the full force of infantry against the French archers. Though the pikemen, led by Maximilian, were ultimately victorious, the French archers proved to be a difficult opponent, as they did in this game.

Maximilian, impressed by the performance of his pikemen, sought to raise more for future wars. These would later become the Landsknecht Pikemen of the Renaissance.

One interesting note from the game is that the French commander was never able to bring the sallying forces from Therouanne into the game. The French CinC command was taken as the middle pip command and the French player never rolled a second six for pips.

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Final Thoughts on Designing Historical Scenarios:

The experience of writing, editing, and playing the scenarios in this book has provided valuable insight into the process of designing historical scenarios. The changes in scale and troop types in DBA 3 have produced some new and interesting wrinkles in recreating these battles.

Scale:

DBA 3 has changed the ground and troop scale for historical battles from its predecessors. Moving from roughly 1000 Foot per element and 500 mounted to 400-600 Foot and 200-250 mounted per element allows a large number of Dark Age and Medieval battles to be represented without undue scaling. Battles such as Brunanburh or Hastings can be fought as double or triple battle games. These important historical engagements barely worked as a standard sized game under 2.2.

The other side of this change is that some of the larger Ancient battles now present interesting design challenges. With the average Republican Roman legion represented nicely by a standard 12 element DBA army, how does one refight Cannae with its 8 legions and all those Roman Allies?

A designer could simply assign 8-12 commands to the Romans and a correspondingly large number to the Carthaginians. This however does not square well with our reading of ancient battles. Most of our narrative understanding of battles throughout history follows the story of two or three commands. Whether this is due to the limitations of ancient historians or is some in-born trait of human understanding the fact is that a large number of commands probably won't produce a desired narrative result. Instead, play testing has shown that either adding more elements per command or perhaps scaling down the battle size (as Graham's Cannae scenario demonstrates) are better solutions. DBA 3 plays well with single commands comprised of 24 or more elements. Limiting the number of commands per side to five or less, and increasing the number of individual elements in each command is recommended.

Skirmishers and Other Light Troops:

The nominal troop scale for DBA 3 is 500 men per foot element. Some may be surprised that this includes light troops as well as their heavy counterparts. This is an artifact of the clever 12 element limit on the standard sized game. Using this scale however to design historical scenarios with battles featuring large number of light troops may present issues with frontage. Light troops simply will not be represented by enough elements to match their historical deployment. A designer could simply change the ratio of men per element to correct this and deploy a much larger number of light troop elements. Care must be taken however as this will change the balance of the game. Psiloi in DBA are made much more powerful than their historic counterparts in order to fit into and balance the 12 element game. If the designer needs to change the ratio for light troops, then the following rule changes are suggested. First, eliminate the immunity granted Psiloi from corner to corner overlap. Second, make Psiloi elements equal to ½ a standard element for breakpoint purposes. Third, reduce the Psiloi combat factors to +1 against both foot and mounted. Whether all of these suggestions are needed depends on the scale chosen for each Psiloi element. Play test carefully and use the changes that work best for the scenario.

Good gaming!

Joe Collins