

Simple Ancient Battle Rules

(DBA made less complex)



Simple Ancient Battle Rules

Some players have noticed that each new version of DBA is slightly more complex than that of its predecessor. This is inevitable as more historical accuracy and play-balance is added as it evolves and improves over time. Nonetheless, some people still yearn for and would prefer something with a little less complexity.

So here is a simplified version, with some of the complicated rules and awkward fiddly procedures removed. It still gives broadly the same overall effects and combat outcomes as the full normal rules do...it's just simpler.

by Stevie, July 2021.

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Introduction

The main purpose of these “Simple Ancient Battle Rules” (known as SAB for short) is to provide players with broadly the same effects and outcomes as the full DBA 3.0 rules, but to do so by using less complex methods. Of course, it is difficult to simplify things without the introduction of some degree of distortion, but this has been kept to the barest minimum where possible, with simplicity being the primary goal.

What these rules are **not** about is correcting any perceived play-balance issues or inherent unit weaknesses. Such things are the job of House Rules, although simplifying the full DBA rules is itself a form of House Rule.

These SAB rules, being less complex, may be of use when demonstrating DBA to new players. Even veteran players may benefit when returning to DBA after being away for some time playing other rule-sets and find they have forgotten a few of the more obscure and finicky rules, or just prefer something a little bit simpler.

The layout is in four sections: simplified base depths and simplified movement, with two additional optional sections dealing with simplified unit classes and a simplified combat outcome chart. All these sections, and the contents within them, are designed to be modular, allowing players the freedom to choose the amount of complexity they feel comfortable with. Thus each section offers players three choices on how to play:- (a) just use the SAB rule, or (b) use the full DBA rule, or (c) substitute a House Rule for that particular rule.

Other possible simplifications, such as reducing the terrain types and making placement easier, having just one type of river, army deployment zones, unit PIP costs, subsequent moves, who can interpenetrate who, and so on, have not been included. However, players themselves can add their own extra simplifications by only allowing Hamlet BUA's, by not permitting civilians to sally, not using some of the more rare and exotic unit types such as static foot and double-bases, and by ignoring Battlefield Table Edge 'Phantom' Overlaps.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank Barritus, Jim1973, Simon, Timurilank, and all the others that have participated in this project for both their helpful suggestions and their assistance in the making these SAB rules.

SIMPLIFIED UNIT DEPTHS

DBA has a bewildering array of various base depths. The 15mm scale figures for example has some that are 15mm deep, some 20mm deep, some 30mm deep, some 40mm, some 60mm, and even some 80mm deep.

And the only reason we are still using this archaic, antiquated and out-of-date basing system is not because it is more realistic or expedient, but solely because it was arbitrarily dreamed up over 50 years ago in the 1970's for the old-fashioned WRG rules, and players have been reluctant to re-base their existing figures ever since.

It's time this obsolete arrangement, having no relevance any more, were updated for use in the 21st century.

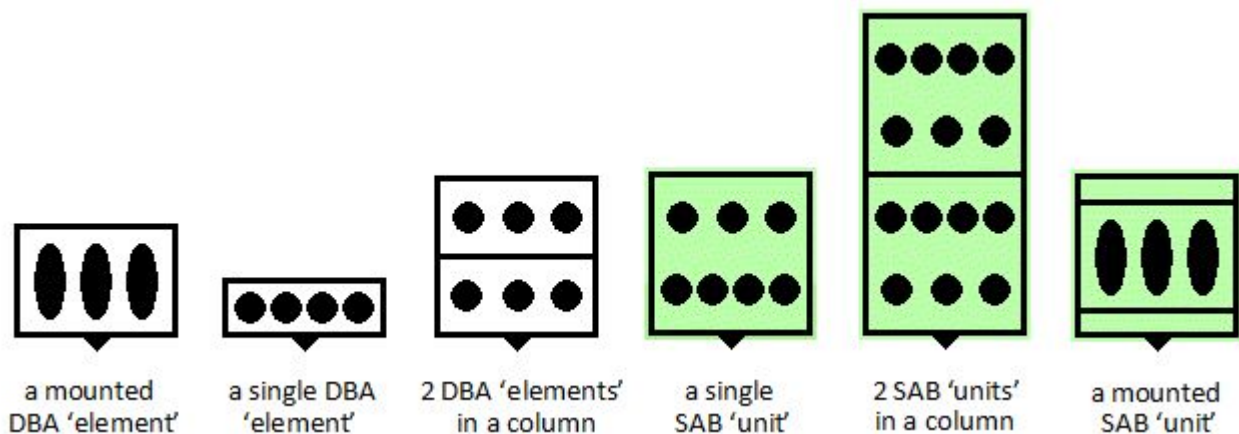
So here is a new simplified system.

No need to re-base your existing troops...just have all DBA 'bases' with a thin piece of green card 1 BW square placed beneath them, held in place with double-sided sticky tape for quick removal if required when playing against opponents who are still using the old system. Having troops on 'stands' all with the same depth helps to simplify recoiling and pursuing, as they will all move 1 BW. It also makes playing on a grid so much easier.

Now you could just have a single DBA 'base' on each 1 BW 'stand', but that looks unappealing for foot troops. Alternatively, since there is room, why not have *two* DBA foot 'elements' on each 'stand' instead? It requires more foot figures, but it looks fantastic and very realistic, plus 1 BW 'stands' are less likely to fall over on hills.

However, having foot two deep does **not** turn them into double-based units, any more than having say Horde figures two deep makes them a double-base. It just means the number of figures on a SAB 'stand' has become purely decorative; have a 3 figure DBA foot 'element' in front and a 4 figure behind and you have a 'fast' unit. Reverse this and it becomes a 'solid' unit. Double-bases will still exist and retain their current characteristics, i.e. +1 against foot and the first lost counts as two 'units', it just means the ordinary units will look the same.

Those deep DBA 'bases' that will not fit on 1 BW 'stands', such as double-based **6Cv** and **6Kn**, some **Mtd-Inf**, and a few deep **WWg** and **CP**, **Lit**, and **CWg Command Elements**, are placed on 'stands' 2 BW deep if need be.



Terminology

In DBA, all the figures are fixed to 'bases' of various depths and are called 'elements'.

In SAB, all the DBA 'elements' are placed on 1 BW deep 'stands' and are called 'units'.

Using different terms like this helps to differentiate between the two rule systems.

(Note that by allowing 'solid' foot to be on the same ½ BW deep bases as 'fast' foot, and all foot that do recoil moving ½ a BW, DBA 3.0 is already heading in this direction. In the old WRG days, some figures had to be on individual bases in order to show casualties, so at least that archaic, antiquated and obsolete basing system has now been abandoned. Maybe, after 50 years, it's time we moved on to the next logical step...)

SIMPLIFIED MOVEMENT

The most complicated thing about DBA is the 'free-measuring-system', which requires various complex rules. And many players do not realise that DBA is *already* being played on a Virtual Grid...oh, you can move about pretty much as you like, but once you touch an enemy strict complicated rules come into play forcing players to act *as if* they were playing on a Virtual Grid. So why not extend this principle to cover ALL movement?

The Virtual Grid: You could play on an actual visible grid, but some players may find that to be unattractive. Alternatively, simply assume an invisible Virtual Grid is on your existing wargames tables and battle mats. This is surprisingly easy to do; just make ALL moves in whole BW's, with no fractions, and use a measuring stick to ensure that all 1 BW square 'unit stands' deploy and end a move whole BW's from the table edges. In other words, you either move a whole BW or not at all, and this includes recoiling and pursuing 1 BW.

Deployment: Unlike DBA, your Deployment Zone extends 5 BW (or 7 BW if using a large 20 BW square table) from your *table base-edge* rather than 3 BW from the table centre-line. Side zones are the same as normal. This avoids ½ BW squares. If worried about starting 5 BW from the enemy, then don't deploy so far forward.

Movement: It costs 1 BW to move to an adjacent (but not diagonal) grid square, and costs 1 BW to turn 90° or 180° within a square. Groups, unlike single units, usually only move forwards, but see '**Inclining**' below.

No Wheeling: Units will have to spend PIP's to move individually to change their facing. This is actually more realistic than expecting untrained warriors, unruly knights, and wild warbands to be able to manoeuvre in the heat of battle with the minute precision of a highly drilled modern military band on a nice flat parade ground!

Inclining: Instead of wheeling, groups and columns in SAB have a new movement manoeuvre called 'inclining'. When a group moves forward, but they use less than their full speed, they may shift 1 BW (and *only* 1 BW) to their side. This replaces the DBA multiple wheels during a bound and groups sliding sideways in a Threat Zone.

Threat Zones: These act as normal. If the far edge of a TZ touches a grid square, the whole square is affected. As units cannot pass through a TZ, when you enter a square under the influence of a TZ you must turn to face the enemy generating that TZ. If you do not have enough movement to turn, you cannot enter that square.

Shooting Arcs Of Fire: Since it is not possible to make minute turns when playing on a grid, causing shooting blind spots, all shooters in SAB have a 45° arc of fire instead. This is easy to calculate; as all SAB units are on 1 BW square 'stands', simply draw a line from their rear-corner to their front-corner to see their arc of fire.

Shooting And Command Range Measurements: Use a tape measure or your measuring stick to determine the shortest straight-line distance from the closest point (usually a corner) between one unit and another. For simplicity, units and groups entirely of LH-LCm are always in Command Range, even when out-of-sight.

Conforming: As the DBA 3.0 page 9 rules, so that ending a voluntary move phase with any unit in contact other than positions (a), (b), (c), or (d) is illegal (but can still occur accidentally due to recoils or pursuits).

Recoiling Lack Of Room: If recoiling 1 BW from an enemy side or rear-edge, but there isn't room to move, units stay where they are. If recoiling from an enemy *front-edge* and there isn't room, units are destroyed. This might result in ending the combat phase with a front-edge still in contact with the enemy if the victor does not pursue. If so just apply the DBA 'Turning-To-Face' procedure after the end of the next move phase. Neither party will be able to move away, as breaking-off is only possible as the result of a combat outcome.

Terrain: Use your existing terrain features as normal. Any units partially in **Area Terrain** will be affected by it. **Area Terrain** still needs an *empty* 1 BW grid square between them and (unless they are a **BUA**) a table-edge. **Waterways** work best when their shorelines barely touch or at most only slightly enter adjacent grid squares. **Rivers, Roads, BUA Gates** and **Gully** work best when their centre-line is placed in the middle of a grid square. **Non-Paltry Rivers** slow speed, but not the rear of a column if the leader starts completely clear of the water. **Shooting range** is unaffected if passing through a single square that is partially or fully occupied by a **Difficult Hill, Wood, Oasis, Dunes**, or a **BUA Edifice** or **Hamlet**. Line-of-sight will still be blocked by any **Hill ridge-lines**, but in SAB having a unit even partly upslope, not just its front-edge, is enough to gain the +1 uphill advantage.

SIMPLIFIED MOVEMENT DIAGRAMS

Here are some diagrams with practical examples to help explain how the Virtual Grid movement system works. In a few of these diagrams the actual grid itself has been made visible as an aid to clarity and understanding.

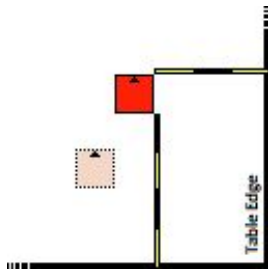


Diagram #1: Positioning On The Virtual Grid

A unit with a speed of 3 BW wishes to move 2 BW forward and 1 BW to the side.

After the unit has been placed in its new location, measuring sticks or a tape measure is used to ensure it is whole (not partial) BW's from the table-edges.

This positioning also applies during deployment, so everyone is always lined-up.

Diagram #2: Single Unit Movement

This shows the possible moves allowed for units with a speed of 2 BW.

The red unit moves 2 BW (but not diagonally) without changing its facing.

The blue unit moves 1 BW then spends the remaining 1 BW to turn 90°, and for the same cost could have turned 180° instead of just turning 90°. It could also turn 90° or 180° first and then move the 1 BW if it wishes.

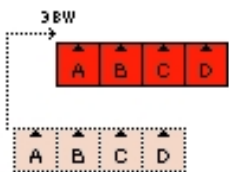
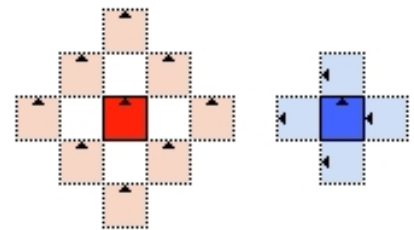


Diagram #3: Inclining Groups

A group with a speed of 3 BW could have spent the usual number of PIP's to move 3 BW straight forwards, but decides to move 2 BW forwards and use the remaining 1 BW to slide sideways (note: units cannot slide sideways to leave a Threat Zone). Even if it had only moved 1 BW forwards it could still only slide 1 BW sideways.

Remember that columns are also groups, so they can incline in this way as well.

Groups must move at least 1 BW forwards before they can slide sideways, so a group with a speed of only 1 BW cannot incline (but could still form a column).

Diagram #4: Forming And Moving Columns

A group with a speed of 3 BW wants to form a column. Each front-edge must touch a rear-edge and not end with its front further back from its starting line.

In the next bound, once in a column, Unit-A decides to move 1 BW forwards, turn 90°, and then move 1 BW in the new direction. Unit-C follows Unit-B, but ends the move phase no longer part of that column, and not even as part of the A-B group.

If Unit-A first turned 90° and moved 2 BW to the right, Unit-C could have followed Unit-B so its front-edge still touches a rear-edge and remained part of that column.

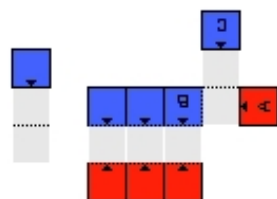
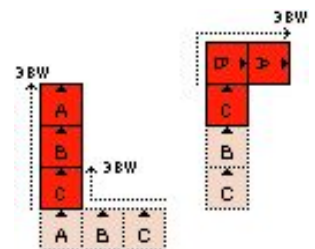


Diagram #5: Threat Zones

If the *far-edge* of a TZ touches a square, then the entire square is under its influence.

Red Unit-A cannot attack the flank of Unit-B, as that means entering the TZ of Unit-C. Entering a TZ prevents passing through, so you must turn and face the TZ generator. If you lack sufficient movement to turn and face, you cannot enter that TZ square.

Subsequent Moves cannot touch the enemy during a bound, even corner-to-corner, unless using Road moves. But this does mean they can pin and be pinned by enemy Threat Zones (*in DBA they cannot be within 1 BW*).

Diagram #6: Shooting Arcs Of Fire

Here a red unit of Bowmen is targeting a blue column.

Blue Unit-B at the rear of the column is 2.83 BW away, and its target-edge is visible and within the shooter's 45° arc of fire, so it is a legitimate target.

But although the rear left corner of blue Unit-A at the front of the column is in the shooter's 45° arc of fire, its target-edge is not, so it cannot be shot at.

Had the red unit been a War Wagon, then both blue units could be targets, as War Wagons, like Camps, Cities and Forts, may shoot from any edge.

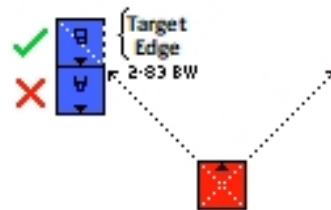


Diagram #7: Contacting And Conforming

Units can only end a movement phase in positions (a), (b), (c) or (d) as listed in the "Contacting The Enemy" section on page 9 of the DBA 3.0 rules.

Neither red Unit-C nor red Unit-D can end in the square marked with an 'X'. Unit-C cannot because it does not start the bound beyond Unit-W's rear-edge. Unit-D cannot if it ends with its side or rear-edge touching Unit-W's rear-edge.

However, red Unit-B **can** move to attack Unit-Y, as that is a legal end of move phase position, and the fact that Unit-Z's rear-edge is being touched by a side-edge is merely accidental (and will prevent Unit-Z from recoiling).

Diagram #8: Columns Attacked In The Flank

In situation 1, where only the column leader is being attacked, **both** of the blue units will be destroyed if Unit-X recoils for "being in a flanked column whose front unit is destroyed" (any others behind Unit-Y are unaffected).

In situation 2, if Unit-Y is **not** giving rear-support to Unit-X, it turns-to-face and is no longer in a column, so both blue units will each fight separately.

But if Unit-Y **were** giving rear-support to Unit-X, then Unit-Y would **not** turn-to-face Unit-B...the two blue units would be treated as if they were a single deep double-based unit, and **both** will be destroyed if Unit-X recoils. (This mimics and gives the same outcomes and effects as Figures 20a, 20b and 20c in the DBA 3.0 rule book)

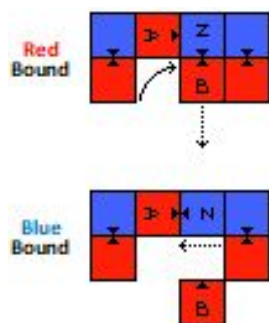
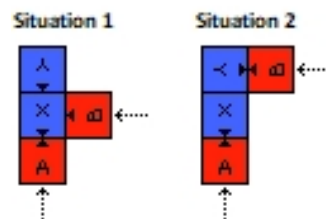


Diagram #9: Recoiling Lack Of Room

A gap has been made in the blue battleline, and the red player 'closes-the-door'. If blue Unit-Z is recoiled, it will be destroyed, as it is being attacked in the flank. If Unit-Z wins, red Unit-B will recoil but Unit-A has no room, so it stays where it is. (But recoiling Elephants always move back, destroying all not in a BUA or Camp).

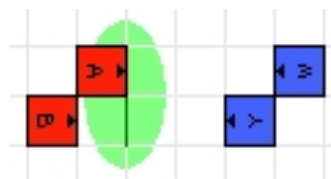
In the next bound, Unit-Z will turn-to-fight Unit-A, with the loser being destroyed for being unable to recoil from an enemy front-edge (unless they are Elephants).

Had a victorious Unit-Z pursued in the red bound (breaking-off contact with Unit-A due to a combat outcome), Unit-A would have no overlap and no effect on Unit-Z.

Diagram #10: Terrain Blocking Shooting

This shows a small Wood, Oasis, Dunes, Hamlet, etc., just 3 x 1½ BW in size. The closest point of Unit-A, its right front-corner, only passes through one partial terrain square, so it can still shoot and be shot at by both blue units.

Red Unit-B's line of fire passes through *two* partially occupied terrain squares, so shooting is blocked as shown by the green line. If blue Unit-Y advances to touch the green line, Unit-B and Unit-Y could then shoot each other, as shooting can pass through one partially or fully occupied terrain square.



OPTIONAL: SIMPLIFIED UNIT CLASSIFICATIONS

Some players may prefer to have fewer troop types in order to help reduce the overall complexity of DBA. So here is a simplified system that has several of the troop types amalgamated together into fewer classes. Basically, all **Swift Foot** are considered to be 'fast' and all **Heavy Foot** and **Static Foot** are treated as if 'solid'.

Swift Mounted can deploy in the extra deployment zones (as can **Ax**, **Ps**, and **Mtd-Inf**), and do not pursue.

Heavy Mounted can only be deployed *within* the initial deployment zone, and they *do* pursue (except **4Kn**).

Swift Foot do not suffer the bad going penalty, and are not slowed by terrain except Rivers (but **Wb** pursue).

Heavy Foot *do* suffer in bad going, they *will* pursue (except **Sp**), and they recoil mounted on an equal score.

Static Foot cannot choose to contact the enemy, do not pursue, and also recoil mounted on an equal score.

TROOP CLASS	SPEED	UNIT TYPES	DBA Codes
Swift Mounted	4 BW	Light Horsemen	LH and LCm
		Light Cavalry	Cv and LCh, (including 6Cv)
		Camelry	Cm
Heavy Mounted	3 BW	Scythed Chariots	SCh
		Elephants	El
		Heavy Cavalry Knights	3Kn, 4Kn and HCh, (including 6Kn)
Swift Foot	3 BW	Warbands	3Wb and 4Wb
		Light Auxiliaries	3Ax and 4Ax
		Skirmishing Psiloi	Ps
		Bowmen	3Bw and 4Bw, (including 8Bw, Cb, Lb, and Mtd-Inf)
Heavy Foot	2 BW	Spearmen	Sp, (including 8Sp)
		Pikemen	3Pk and 4Pk
		Blades	3Bd and 4Bd, (including 6Bd)
		Hordes	5Hd and 7Hd, (<i>sallying civilians are not used in SAB</i>)
Static Foot	2 BW	Artillery	Art
		War Wagons	WWg
		Command Units	CP, Lit, CWg (who fight, but are not destroyed, as Bd)

Notes:-

Cm and **SCh** have swapped speeds to allow all the **Heavy Mounted** troops to stay together in the same class.

Double-bases can still be used if players don't mind the extra complication; they keep their +1 against foot in good going, and the first lost still counts as 2 'units', but **6Cv** and **6Kn** need to be on 'stands' 2 BW deep.

(**Cm** moving 4 BW is not that unusual; **Cm** and **Cv** had the same speed in DBA 2.2 and early drafts of DBA 3.0.

4Bw and **8Bw** moving 3 BW may seem excessive, but to shoot they are limited to only moving 1 BW anyway.

Moving 3 BW allows them to 'shut-the-door' and 'attack-the-flank' of recoiled foot, just as they can in DBA.

3Pk troops in earlier versions of DBA were variously represented as either 3Ax, 4Ax, 3Sp, 4Sp, 4Pk, 3Wb, and even 5Wb, depending on their nation. Combining **3Pk** with **4Pk** allows them to retain their primary DBA 3.0 abilities, i.e. good against mounted, high rear-support factors, likes to pursue, but penalised if in bad going)

Modular Rules

If you prefer having **Cm/3Pk/3Bd** moving 3 BW, **SCh** moving 4 BW, or **4Bw/8Bw** moving 2 BW, then do so.

Likewise, if you are quite happy with DBA 3.0's 'fast' and 'solid' classes and don't mind the extra complexity, then just ignore both this section and the following **Optional Simplified Combat Outcome Chart** altogether.

Things that have not changed

All other DBA 3.0 rules will still apply, such as army list choices, terrain selection and placement, Camps, the invader base-edge selection, Littoral Landings, PIP costs and command ranges, subsequent moves, dismounting, interpenetration, conforming, shooting, combat factors, overlaps, side and rear-support, rough and bad going effects, recoiling through and pushing back friends, fleeing, who pursues, and so on.

OPTIONAL: SIMPLIFIED SHOOTING AND CLOSE COMBAT OUTCOMES

Here is a simplified **Combat Chart** if using the simplified **Unit Classes**. Some minor alterations are inevitable. Items in **blue** can be ignored if civilians cannot sally and the only **BUA** allowed is a single rough going **Hamlet**. Items in **brown** are not penalized in bad going, nor are they slowed by any terrain except **non-Paltry Rivers**.

Rear-support still applies as normal, and **Sp** will receive side-support from other **Sp** and *any* **Bd** type troops, but now *all* **Bd** troops give side-support to *all* **Bows** when these are in close combat with **Foot** in **Good Going**. Troops that shoot without being shot at ignore any unfavourable outcomes. All the DBA **Art** rules still apply.

IF SCORE EQUAL

No effect when defending (or sacking) and when assaulting a Camp (and a City or Fort) . Otherwise:-	
LH-LCm, Cv-LCh, plus EI	Recoil (in close combat) from all Heavy Foot and Static Foot . Else no effect.
Kn-HCh, plus Cm	Destroyed (in close combat) by any Cb, Lb , or Bd type troops. 4Kn recoils from 3Kn . Recoil (in close combat) from all other Heavy Foot and Static Foot . Else no effect.
SCh	Destroyed.
All Foot	CP, Lit, CWg destroyed by Foot if contacted by 2 enemy front-edges. Else no effect.

IF SCORE LESS

Destroyed when defending (or sacking) and recoiled when assaulting a Camp (and a City or Fort) . Otherwise:-	
LH-LCm or Cv-LCh	Flee from SCh , or if in Bad Going . LH-LCm also flee from (shooting) Art . Else recoil.
Cm	Flee from EI . Destroyed by SCh , or if in Bad Going . Else recoil.
SCh	Flee if shot at (unless shot in the rear). Else destroyed.
EI	Flee from other EI . Destroyed by LH-LCm, Ax, Ps , and by (shooting) Art . Else recoil. (EI are also destroyed if assaulting a City or Fort gate)
Kn-HCh	Destroyed by LH-LCm, Cm, SCh or by EI . Else recoil.
Wb	Destroyed by Kn-HCh or SCh in Good Going . Else recoil.
Ax	Destroyed by Kn-HCh in Good Going . Else recoil.
Ps	Destroyed by Kn-HCh, Cv-LCh and Cm if in Going counted as Good . Else recoil.
Bw (including Mtd-Inf)	Destroyed by any Mounted . Mtd-Inf are also destroyed if in Bad Going . Else recoil.
Sp, Pk, or Bd	Destroyed by Kn-HCh or SCh in Good Going , or by Wb . Else recoil.
Hd	Destroyed by Kn-HCh or EI in Good Going , or by Wb . Recoil (if shot). Else no effect.
Art (and sallying civilians)	Destroyed.
WWg	Destroyed by EI or by (shooting) Art . Else no effect.
CP, Lit, or CWg	No effect.

IF SCORE DOUBLED

Destroyed when defending (or sacking) a Camp (and a City or Fort) . Otherwise:-	
LH-LCm	Destroyed by any Mounted, Ps, Bw , (shooting) Art , or if in Bad Going . Else flee .
Cv-LCh	Flee from Sp, Pk or Hd if in Good Going , or from (close combat) Art . Else destroyed.
Ps	Recoil from EI or SCh . Destroyed by other Mounted if in Going counted as Good , and destroyed in any going by Ax, Ps , or by (close combat) Bw . Else flee .
All other troops	Destroyed.

Notes:-

Swift Foot do not recoil on an equal score from **Heavy Foot** or **Static Foot**, as they are weak enough as it is. Besides, although combined, 'solid' **4Wb/4Ax/4Bw/8Bw** should not recoil from 'solid' foot on an equal score.

But since these SAB rules are modular, feel free to use the full DBA 3.0 outcomes for any of these if you wish. Other simplifications are of course possible, but doing so will entail even more distortions from the full rules.