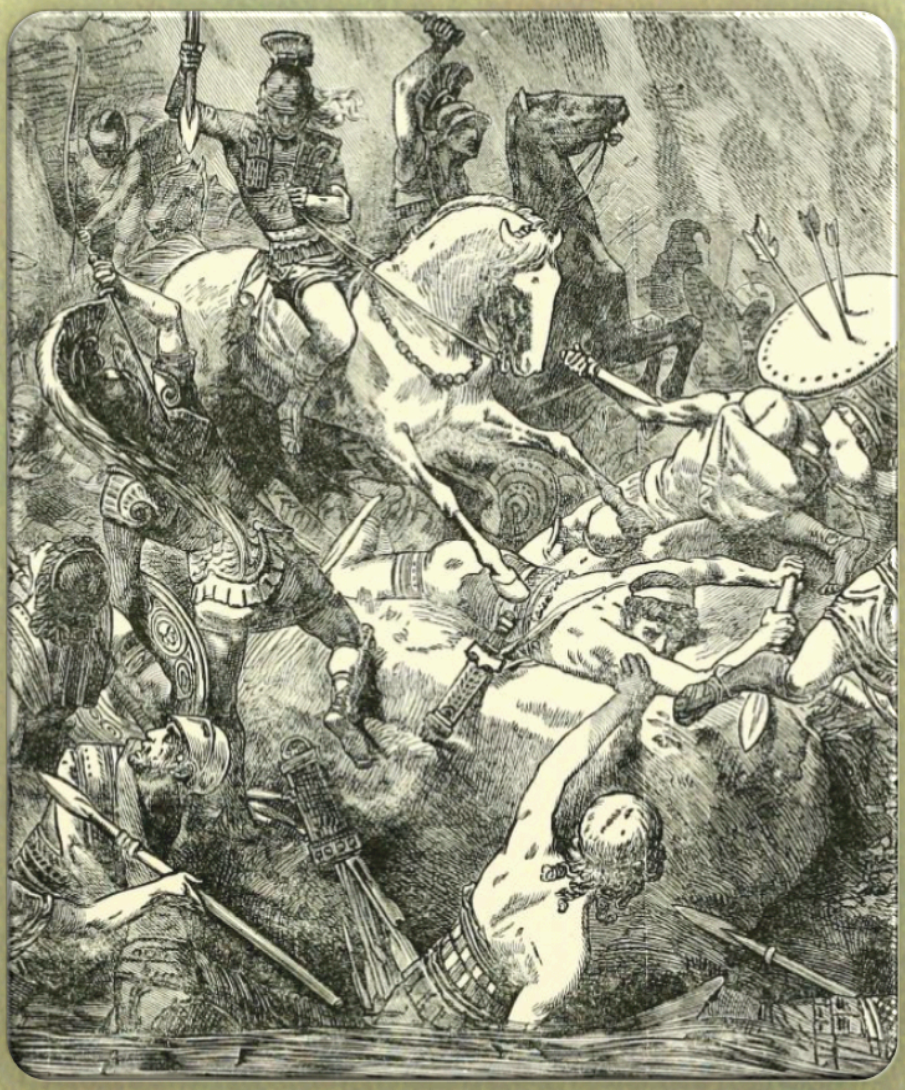
VOLUME I: RISE OF THE HOPLITE

BLADE & BOW

THE ANCIENT WORLD AT WAR



MARATHON (490 BCE) ✸ THERMOPYLAE (480 BCE)
PLATAEA (479 BCE) ✸ MYCALE (479 BCE)

2ND EDITION, GAME DESIGN BY MIKE NAGEL

Table of Contents

BLADE & BOW
THE ANCIENT WORLD AT WAR

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Blade & Bow is a low to moderately complex game depicting combat between ancient armies with a goal of showing the evolution of infantry combat from the adoption of the Greek hoplite formation through the Roman maniple and cohort. Two players take control of historical armies to see how well they might fare as compared to their historical counterparts. Each battle should take two to three hours to complete.

2.0 COMPONENTS

Following is a list of components included with the game.

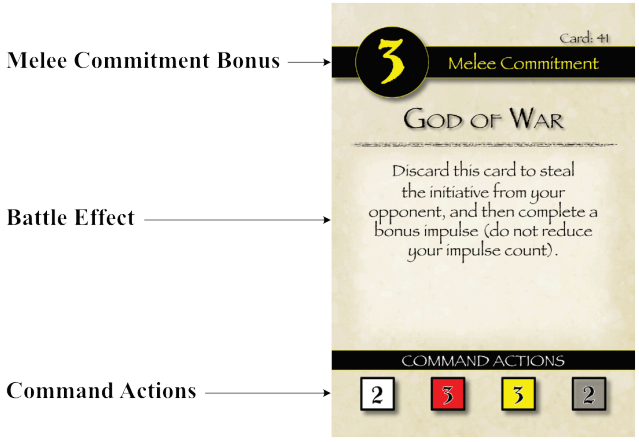
4x	17x22" Map Sheets
1x	Deck of 60 Cards
1.5x	Counter Sheets
3x	8.5x11" Game Charts
1x	Rules Booklet
4x	Six-Sided Dice

NOTE: *There are four dice included with the game, but several more are better. Ideally, sixteen dice should be available, eight for each player. This may seem like a lot of dice, which it is, but the game employs a "bucket of dice" combat system that requires a player to roll up to eight dice at a time (although this is the exception rather than the rule).*

2.1 **Game Map** – Each battle is fought on an 17x22 inch map sheet. The map sheet is overlayed with a grid of squares, each of which is noted with a grid coordinate (e.g. "A1" or "H5") used to aid in setup. At the lower right of the map is a compass rose indicating numeric directions that may be required for play through special rules. Also note on the map the setup positions for each side, indicating which types of combat units begin in which squares. When placing units on the map, position each unit so that it matches orientation of the setup indicator (both the indicator and the unit must read left-to-right).

NOTE: *Experienced wargamers may question the use of squares rather than the more standard hexagonal grid. The reason is simple. Combat during the ancient period was linear in nature, and the use of a hexagonal grid causes odd side-effects (units sort of "waddle" from hex to adjacent hex). Squares are used instead to allow a more natural form of movement by combat units.*

2.2 **Action Deck** – The game employs a deck of sixty cards that is referred to as the "action" deck. Each card in the deck is used in different ways during play.



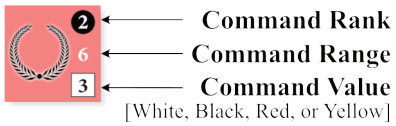
2.2.1 **Melee Commitment Bonus** – The number in the upper left corner of each card indicates a bonus that can be applied to morale rolls when combat units attempt to enter melee. Note that there is one "reshuffle" card that does not include a melee commitment modifier. This card can never be used for commitment and when it is drawn by either player, the action deck is immediately reshuffled.

2.2.2 **Battle Effect** – The text at the center of each card is a block of text that takes effect when the card is discarded by a player as noted by that text. Note that this text supersedes any game mechanics described within these rules.

2.2.3 **Command Actions** – At the bottom of each card are four numbers (one, two, or three) within colored squares. During each turn, players draw cards to find the number of actions each can take. The number used is the one that matches the color of the army's overall commander's command value at the time the card is drawn.

2.3 **Unit Types** – There are four basic types of units used during play: Leaders, Combat Units, Status Markers, and Camps. Each type of unit is described below.

2.3.1 **Leaders** – These units represent the kings or generals responsible for leading their armies to victory. Each unit has three attributes: Rank, Command Range, and Command Value.



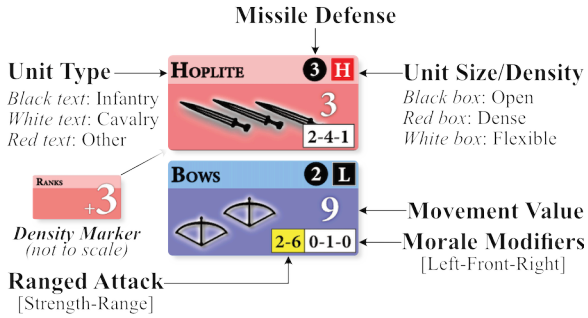
2.3.1.1 **Command Rank** – This value indicates where the leader stands within the command hierarchy of the army. The lower the number, the higher up the commander is in the hierarchy. If there is more than only commander in an army (which is typically the case), the overall commander is the one with the lowest command rank. This is important to note as the command value of the overall comman-

der is used to determine both the army's current morale, as well as the number of action points the army receives when it is activated during the turn.

2.3.1.2 **Command Range** – This value is used to determine how far a leader's command effectiveness extends from the leader's square. This value is in directional points (see 3.1.3 below). The larger this number, the larger a formation a leader can command.

2.3.1.3 **Command Value** – This value indicates the commander's overall effectiveness at command. The numeric value is used to indicate the army's current morale level (which is critical for several game effects). Additionally, the color of the box that surrounds the value is used to determine how many actions an army receives when it is activated. To determine the number of actions, draw a card from the action deck and refer to the command action value whose color matches that of the overall commander's command value.

2.3.2 **Combat Units** – These large units represent the different types of soldiers (afoot or mounted) that engage in combat. Each combat unit is described through several attributes.



2.3.2.1 **Unit Type** – This is the name of the type of unit represented. This varies from very light "psiloi" to the heaviest kind of phalanx. When this name is printed in black text, the unit represents foot infantry. When the name is printed in blue, the unit represents mounted cavalry. If this name is printed in red text, it is a special unit subject to special rules.

2.3.2.2 **Movement** – The large number printed to the right side of the unit is its movement value. This is the number of points a unit may expend to move within its current square and to adjacent squares.

2.3.2.3 **Ranged Attack** – Some units have the ability to conduct ranged combat using bows, spears, slings, or other hurled weapon. A unit capable of a ranged attack has two numbers enclosed by a yellow box at the bottom of its marker. The first number in this box is the unit's ranged combat strength. The second number in this box is the unit's range value.

2.3.2.4 **Missile Defense** – All units have a small number enclosed by a small black circle near the top of their marker. This value is used for defense when they are the target of a missile attack.

2.3.2.5 **Morale Modifiers** – Each unit has three numbers enclosed by a white rectangle at the bottom right of its marker. These numbers indicate morale penalties when an opposing unit is attempting to engage it in melee combat. The numbers are applied when a unit is attacked from the left flank, front, and right flank, respectively.

2.3.2.6 **Units Size/Density** – Each unit has an indicator in its upper right corner that specifies how large and how dense the unit's formation might be. Units are either light (L), medium (M), or heavy (H). The color of the box that encloses this value indicates the unit's density. Units are either open (black), dense (red), or flexible (white). Units that are dense or flexible typically also receive a density marker during setup. The density of a unit typically determines how it absorbs hits during combat.

2.3.2.7 **Disrupted Side** – The reverse of a unit represents its "disrupted" side. Units become disrupted voluntarily as part of movement or involuntarily as part of combat. A unit's attributes may change (sometimes significantly) when flipped from one side to the other.

2.3.2.8 **Density Markers** – These markers are the same size as combat units and are placed under heavy or flexible units to indicate the number of additional rows (or "ranks") of soldiers employed with the combat unit. Scenario rules dictate the values of density markers and how they can be applied to dense or flexible units. Density markers may not be examined by an opponent unless an enemy unit has line of sight through one of the unit's flank or rear sides (see 3.1.1) or the unit is within an enemy zone of control (see 3.1.2).

NOTE: *Combat during the ancient period prior to the "common era" typically involved large formations of men massed together, using their weight to push an enemy formation out of line in order to expose less protected flanks to attack. This type of combat led to the creation of the hoplite formation by the Greeks, which employed a formation upwards of ten ranks of soldiers deep. The Macedonians increased this to near thirty ranks using much longer spears. The Romans returned to a lower number of ranks, but built their formations to be more flexible while engaged in order to remain fresher for longer periods. In game terms, each additional rank bonus provided by density markers is roughly equivalent to one or two additional ranks of men.*

2.3.3 **Status Markers** – There are several types of neutral markers that are used to track play during the game.

2.3.3.1 **Turn Marker** – This unit is placed in the '1' space of the Turn Track at the beginning of the game and advanced one space at the end of each turn. The marker is double-sided and flipped to the appropriate color to indicate which army holds the initiative during the current turn.

2.3.3.2 **Rout Level** – Each side receives one of these markers, which is placed on a player's Unit Losses track in a square defined by the scenario rules. This marker indicates the loss level at which the army automatically quits the field.

2.3.3.3 **Army Losses** – Each side receives one of these markers, and places it in the '0' box of their own Unit Losses track. The marker is moved up the track as the army loses units and steps through destruction or routing. When this marker enters the box holding the rout level marker, the army automatically quits the field.

2.3.3.4 **Impulses** – Each side receives one of these markers to use on the Impulse/Actions track. At the beginning of each turn, players place these markers in the boxes stipulated by the scenario rules. The markers indicate the number of impulses a side receives and has expended during the current turn.

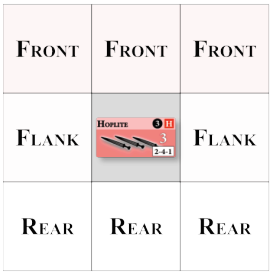
2.3.3.5 **Actions** – Each side receives one of these markers to use on the Impulse/Actions track. At the beginning of each impulse, the marker is placed in the box equal to the number of actions received as stipulated by an action card drawn. The marker is used to keep track of the number of actions available during the current impulse.

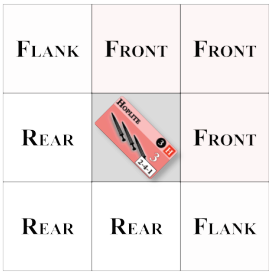
2.3.4 **Camps** – Camps are special types of combat units that represent an army's source of supply for the battle. Overrunning a camp has a negative effect upon the owning player's morale. The location of the camps are noted on the map in the same manner as combat units. Note below the rules on how camps are attacked and overrun.

3.0 Key Game Concepts

Below are several key game concepts that players need to understand before diving into the sequence of play and mechanics of moving units and engaging in combat.

3.1 **Unit Positioning** – A combat unit is placed within a square and faced clearly in one of eight directions (as noted on the map's compass rose). If a unit's position is unclear at any time, the opposing player may adjust the unit as he or she sees fit.





3.1.1 **Directional Squares** – When a unit is clearly positioned within a square, whether orthogonally or diagonally, the three squares directly to the unit's front are its "front" squares. The squares to the unit's left and right are its "flank squares. The squares to the unit's rear are it's "rear" squares.

3.1.2 **Zones of Control** – A Zone of Control (ZOC) indicates the squares adjacent to a unit into which it can extend its influence. Additionally, the square directly in front of a unit is a "strong" ZOC, while the other squares are "weak" ZOCs. When two adjacent, friendly units share a weak ZOC square, it is considered "strong." A friendly ZOC is referred to simply as a ZOC. An enemy unit's ZOC is referred to as an EZOC. This is an important distinction to note as these terms affect much of the game play. Disrupted (flipped) units do not have a ZOC. Friendly ZOCs do not negate EZOCs.

3.1.3 **Directional Points** – Progression from square to square is key to movement, ranged combat, and command. The management of this progression is essentially the same, but with some restriction for movement (see 7.0 Movement) and combat (see 8.0 Ranged Combat, specifically 8.4 Arc of Fire). A pool of points (movement points, range points, or command range points) is expended in calculating distance from the active unit's square to a target square. The cost to progress orthogonally from square to adjacent square costs two directional points. The cost to progress diagonally from square to adjacent square costs three directional points. The facing of the unit within a square had no bearing upon these costs.

3.2 **Stacking** – The ability to place more than one unit into a square is referred to as "stacking." Only a single combat unit may occupy a square at any time. Any number of leaders may occupy the same square (although this is not a good idea). Units may never enter squares occupied by enemy combat units. Units may pass through friendly units or displace friendly units.

3.3 **Line of Sight** – In order for a unit to see an enemy unit, it must have a clear Line of Sight (LOS). A LOS is an imaginary line drawn from the center of a friendly unit's square (the spotter) to the center of the enemy unit's square (the target). Count the shortest distance to the target in directional points

from square to square along this line. If any of the intervening squares crossed by this sequence of squares contain hinderances, the line of sight to the target is blocked and the target may not be attacked. Hindrances include any squares that contain Hill, Town, or Woods terrain. Friendly and enemy units are also considered hindrances if both the spotter and target occupy clear or occupy Hill terrain. Adjacent units always have a clear LOS to each other. If more than one route to the target can be determined at the same cost in directional points, the defender determines the path taken.

3.4 **Morale** – During the course of play, units will be called upon to test their morale for many different reasons. This is done by rolling one or more dice and checking the modified result of each. If *any* of the modified results are greater than the overall commander's command value (whether he is in command of the unit checking morale or not), the morale check has failed and the appropriate penalty (if any) applied.

3.4.1 **Morale Dice** – At least one die is always rolled when checking morale. The situation calling for the morale roll may call for additional morale dice to be rolled. All dice are rolled simultaneously.

3.4.2 **Morale Modification** – Some situations may call for a unit's morale itself to be modified. In these instances, make all morale adjustments prior to rolling morale dice (exception: Morale Commitment, see 4.1, below).

EXAMPLE*: a unit adjacent to a leader and whose overall commander has a command value of 3 wants to melee an enemy unit with a +3 morale dice modifier. The unit rolls four dice (one for itself and three more for the enemy unit) and rolls a 2, two 4s and a 6 and fails the roll due to 6 being greater than the leader's command value (the two 4s pass as the unit reduces these rolls by -2 for being adjacent to a leader). The engagement does not happen unless one melee commitment point is spent to reduce the 6 to a 5 (which leader adjacency reduces to a 3) by discarding a card for its melee commitment points.*

3.5 **Formations** – Formations are groups of units that are activated together to perform the same action. Actions include Movement, Ranged Combat, Melee Combat, and Rally. A unit is considered to be part of a formation if it is no more than one empty square between any other unit in the same formation, within the command range of a leader, and capable of executing the command ordered (disrupted units may not be part of a formation ordered to melee or perform ranged combat). A formation can be a single unit. Having a leader stacked with a unit that is part of a formation is not required, although it can be helpful.

3.6 **Unit Ranks** – Dense and flexible infantry units are stacked with a density marker that indicates additional ranks or rows of men that constitute a unit's make-up. These ranks are eliminated during the combat process through the application of step-losses after a unit becomes disrupted. Each successful hit by an enemy unit eliminates one rank. A unit that has no ranks left to eliminate may rout, instead. See 14.2 on setting up ranks.

4.0 Action Deck

The deck of 60 cards is referred to as the Action Deck. These cards are used to drive the action of the game. At the beginning of the game, players draw a number of cards from the Action Deck to fill their hands to a designated hand size equal to one plus the Command value of the senior commander in their army. If this commander is killed, the next most senior commander takes over and this new leader's Command value is used to determine hand size during the following turn (if this results in a smaller hand size, no cards need be discarded). If there are no additional commanders available the player's hand size is limited to one card. Cards may be discarded only through playing them or by discarding them at a cost of one action, each. New cards can be acquired randomly if less than the hand size is currently held at a cost of one action each. Each card is noted with a Melee Commitment Point value in its upper left corner as well as an Effect and its descriptive text and a set of Command Values at the bottom. A card may only be used for one of these features.

4.1 **Melee Commitment Points** – The numeric value in the upper left corner of an Action card is used to enhance the results of morale rolls when a unit is attempting to enter melee. In lieu of playing a card for its effect (see 4.2, below), an action card can be discarded to apply its numeric value to decrease the values of the morale dice just rolled. For instance, a unit with a morale of 3 must make a morale check to enter melee using four dice. The rolls are a 2, 3, 5, and 5. The player may discard one or more cards with a summed value of at least four to reduce both 5 results to a 3, thus passing the morale check. When multiple units are attacking together, the total value of commitment points may be distributed among the melee rolls of all units. Note again that these cards are played *after* the melee results are rolled.

4.2 **Effect Text** – The text on a card may be used to augment play during an action or turn. A card played in this manner may not be used for its Melee Commitment or Command Points. It is very possible that the effect text on a card might run contrary to standard rules. In these cases, the text of the card takes precedence. At what point an effect can be played is included within the text of the effect, in addition to the effect's duration. The effect of an action card is only applicable during the action in which it is played, unless the card specifies otherwise. Any number of cards may be played during a single action, but a unit may only benefit from the play of one card at a time. If cards are played si-

multaneously by both players or there is any question as to the order in which card effects are applied, the player holding the initiative determines the order in which the effects are applied. Any cards that modify the results of one or more die rolls must be played prior to the dice being rolled, unless specified otherwise.

4.3 **Command Points** – At the bottom of each card are four color-coded command point values. When a card is drawn to determine the number of actions a player receives during an impulse, compare the color of the ranking commander's command value with the value on the card of the same color. The number in the box is the number of actions a player receives for the impulse.

5.0 Sequence of Play

A scenario is comprised of a number of game turns. There are at least six and as many as twelve. Each turn consists of a series of steps, outlined below. These steps are repeated each turn, until able to determine that the last turn has just been played.

5.1 **Draw Cards** – Each player may draw one action card provided that they currently hold less than their hand size equal to the command value of the overall commander, plus one (*exception: on the first turn, players draw a full hand of cards*). If the last leader in an army is killed, a player's hand size is reduced permanently to one card. If insufficient cards are available to draw or the "reshuffle" card is drawn, reshuffle the action deck. *Note that additional cards may be purchased using actions during the impulse cycle.*

5.2 **Set Impulses** – Each player places his or her impulse marker on the space on the impulse track equal to the value stipulated in the scenario details for his or her army. *This value is reduced by one for each leader or camp lost during play.*

5.3 **Determine Initiative** – Each player rolls a die with the result modified by any effect cards played. The player with the *lower* modified value gains the initiative for the turn and goes first. If tied, the player holding the initiative the prior turn retains it. During the first turn, the player receiving the initiative tie-breaker is noted within the scenario (typically the historical victor). If necessary, flip the turn marker to the color of the player holding the initiative as a reminder.

5.4 **Impulse Cycle** – During the impulse cycle, players alternate spending impulses to activate their units individually or as formations. The number of impulses a player has is dependent upon the scenario rules. The number of units or formations that can be activated during an impulse is based upon a card draw to determine command actions.

5.4.1 **Initiative Player** – Beginning with the player holding the initiative, a player reduces his or her available impulses by one on the Impulse/Actions Track, draws a card from the action deck, and refers to the command value of the same color as the command value of the army's overall commander (white, black, red, or yellow). The resulting number is the number of actions the player may take during the current impulse. Use the action marker on the Impulse/Actions Track to make note of this value, if necessary.

5.4.2 **Non-Initiative Player** – Once a player completes his or her actions, play passes to the opposing player to complete an impulse in the same manner described above. Play now returns to the player holding the initiative to complete another impulse. This back-and-forth continues until both players have completed all their assigned impulses.

5.4.3 **Uneven Impulses** – It is common that one player receives more impulses than his or her opponent during a turn. Depending upon how the initiative is assigned, this may result in a player having two impulses in a row after the opposing player has run out of impulses. This is normal (and an advantage provided to the benefiting army).

5.4.4 **Available Actions** – The types of actions a unit or formation may take are as follows:

5.4.4.1 **Move** – A leader, unit, or formation units may move according to the movement rules.

5.4.4.2 **Ranged Combat** – The unit or formation units may perform ranged combat against enemy units within range and LOS.

5.4.4.3 **Melee Combat** – The unit or formation units may (following morale checks) perform melee combat against units in their frontal ZOC.

5.4.4.4 **Rally** – The unit or formation units may attempt to rally by making morale checks.

5.4.4.5 **Discard Card** – Rather than activate a unit or formation, a player may expend an action to discard a card. This is one way to discard a "Tough Luck" card.

5.4.4.6 **Purchase Card** – If a player is holding less than his or her hand size worth of action cards, a player may expend an action to draw a card from the action deck and add it to his or her hand.

5.4.4.7 **Pass** – Rather than select a unit or formation, a player may expend an action doing nothing.

5.4.5 **Action Sequence** – The sequence in which actions are played are at the discretion of the active player. A player using three action points could spend one to activate a formation for rally, then movement, and then melee. Alternatively, the player could activate a formation for melee three times in a row. Or,

a leader could activate a formation for movement, then move himself and activate a second formation for movement.

5.5 **Rout Management** – After all impulses have been completed, rout management is completed if any units are present on the Rout Management track.

5.5.1 **Return Rallied Units** – Any units that occupy the Rallied Units box are returned to the map in good order. Place these units either within the command range of a leader or in/adjacent to the friendly camp, if not overrun. Units may not be placed in EZOC squares. Units that cannot be returned to the map, owing to stacking limits or EZOC squares are returned to the Routed Units box on the Rout Management track.

5.5.2 **Rout Check** – Units that rout due to combat (or rallied units that could not be placed on the map) are removed from the map and placed into the Routed Units box on the Rout Management track. Each unit in the Routed Units box must make a morale check. Units that succeed are placed in the Rallied Units box. Units that fail are permanently removed from the game. For each eliminated unit, adjust the army losses marker up one box on the Unit Losses track.

5.5.3 **Leader Assistance** – A leader that is stacked on his or her friendly camp provides a -1 modifier to routed units' rally checks. A camp that has been overrun cannot provide this benefit.

5.6 **Victory Determination** – Each army is provided a Rout Level in the scenario description. If the army has had a number of units and steps eliminated that equal or exceed this value, the army routs and the battle is lost. It is possible that both armies might rout simultaneously. In these cases, the army that was not provided the initiative tie-breaker during the first turn wins a marginal victory. Otherwise, the remaining army has won a major victory. If neither army has won by the time the last turn has been completed, the the player whose army is furthest from their breaking point wins a minor victory. If this value is tied, the side sustaining the fewest losses wins a marginal victory. If still tied, the game is a draw.

5.7 **Turn End** – Check the square in which the turn marker is located. If it contains an end-of-game indicator (a small black die icon), roll a die. If the roll is less than or equal to the icon value shown in the current space on the turn track, the game ends immediately. Otherwise, advance the turn marker into the next space on the track and play another turn. If the game has not randomly ended by the twelfth turn, it automatically ends after completing that turn. If the square on the turn track does not contain an end-of-game indicator, advance the turn marker.

6.0 Leaders

Leaders are the heart of the command system. Each leader is rated for his Command and Leadership abilities. A leader does not count against stacking and more than one leader can occupy the same square (although this is not advisable). When a unit leaves a square occupied by a Leader, that leader must accompany the moving unit. A leader may exist alone within a square (to maximize his command range).

6.1 **Leader Attributes** – Leaders are assigned three values:

6.1.1 **Command Rank** – The lower the number, the higher the rank of the commander in an army. The leader with the highest rank is the army commander. If the army commander is removed (temporarily or permanently) from the battle, the next highest ranking commander becomes the army commander. If multiple leaders occupy the same square, only the "ranking" commander in a square can be activated.

6.1.2 **Command Range** – This number indicates how far a commander can extend his influence toward creating a formation of units. The number represents directional points (see 3.1.3) and the range is counted from square to square. This range may be counted in any direction, through empty or enemy occupied spaces.

6.1.3 **Command Value** – This number represents the quality of the leader. This value is used in several different ways, including hand-size determination and morale checks. Generally, the higher the value is, the more capable the leader. Additionally, the color of the box that encloses the command value indicates the action die used in determining the number of actions received during the impulse cycle.

6.2 **Leader Movement** – Moving a leader costs an action during the Impulse cycle. A leader does not have a movement value and are moved in one of the following ways:

6.2.1 **Not in an EZOC** – Leaders that do not currently occupy a square in an EZOC may be moved to any square occupied by a friendly unit or adjacent to a friendly unit. Neither of these locations may be occupied by a "strong" EZOC.

6.2.2 **In an EZOC** – Leaders in an EZOC square may move as noted above, but any unit within the leader's square must make a morale check. If this check fails, a good order unit is disrupted, while a disrupted unit must take a loss (noting that the loss may cause a rout check).

6.3 **Leader Casualties** – When a leader is stacked with a unit that sustains one or more hits, roll a die. On a roll of six, the leader may be killed. Roll a second

die. If the result of the second roll is less than or equal to the leader's command value, the leader is killed and removed from the game permanently. For each leader lost, reduce the army's impulse count by one. If all leaders are killed, an army may no longer create formations. A leader on a unit that routs is placed in the Routed units box and may be moved to a friendly unit or open square during the Rout Maintenance phase. Neither of these squares may be in a "strong" EZOC."

6.4 **Leader Capture** – When a leader occupies a square without a friendly unit and that square is entered by an enemy unit, the leader must immediately make a casualty check (this may be in addition to casualty checks made for a friendly unit in the leader's square being eliminated). If the leader is not killed, displace the leader to the Turn track, two turns ahead of the current turn. The leader returns from the Turn track in the same fashion as if he were routed, above.

6.5 **Leader Effect on Routing** – After checking for leader casualty, a surviving leader cancels the first (only) rout check by the unit the leader is stacked with.

7.0 MOVEMENT

Each unit is marked with a numeric value representing its movement capability. This value is the number of movement (directional) points it has to expend to move from square to square. If a unit does not have enough points left to pay the entry cost into a square or turn within its current location, it must halt movement. A unit need not expend its entire point allotment, but points may not be saved from turn to turn. Terrain in a square may increase its entry cost, depending upon the type of moving unit. Below are the various types of movement a unit may make.

7.1 **Maneuvers** – A combat unit may make a variety of maneuvers during its activation, as long as it has sufficient movement points to complete the maneuver.

7.1.1 **Advance** – A unit may only advance into the square directly ahead of it. The cost to move into a square across a side (orthogonal) is two movement points (2MP). The cost to move into a square across a corner (diagonal) is three movement points (3MP).

7.1.2 **Wheel** – A unit may rotate within its square to face a new direction at the cost of one movement point (1MP) per new direction faced. For example, turning 90 degrees within a square would cost a unit 2MP. Exception: units designated as "light" may rotate once (45 degrees) at no cost upon entering a new square, even upon entering an EZOC.

7.1.3 **Reverse** – Any good ordered open or flexible unit type may reverse (rotate 180 degrees) at the cost of 2 MP. Good ordered dense units may attempt to reverse at the cost of 2 MP but must make a morale check. If the check is successful, rotate the unit. Otherwise, the unit retains it current facing and becomes disrupted. In all cases, disrupted units may not reverse.

7.1.4 **Shield Wall** – If allowed by special scenario rule, in lieu of movement, a unit that is not in an EZOC may place a shield marker in its square to indicate it has formed a Shield Wall.

7.2 **EZOC Effects** – A unit entering an EZOC must halt its movement immediately. A heavy or medium unit may not wheel upon entering an EZOC, but a light unit may execute a single 45-degree direction change upon entering an EZOC.

7.2.1 **Exiting "Weak" EZOC** – A unit in a weak EZOC may wheel or reverse when it begins a turn within an EZOC. A unit in a weak EZOC may exit that square at no additional cost. A unit exiting a weak EZOC square may enter another EZOC square projected by the same or a different enemy unit.

7.2.2 **Exiting "Strong" EZOC** – A unit may not move within or exit a "strong" EZOC except through retreat. *Retreating does not constitute movement per se, and therefore is not restricted by these rules.*

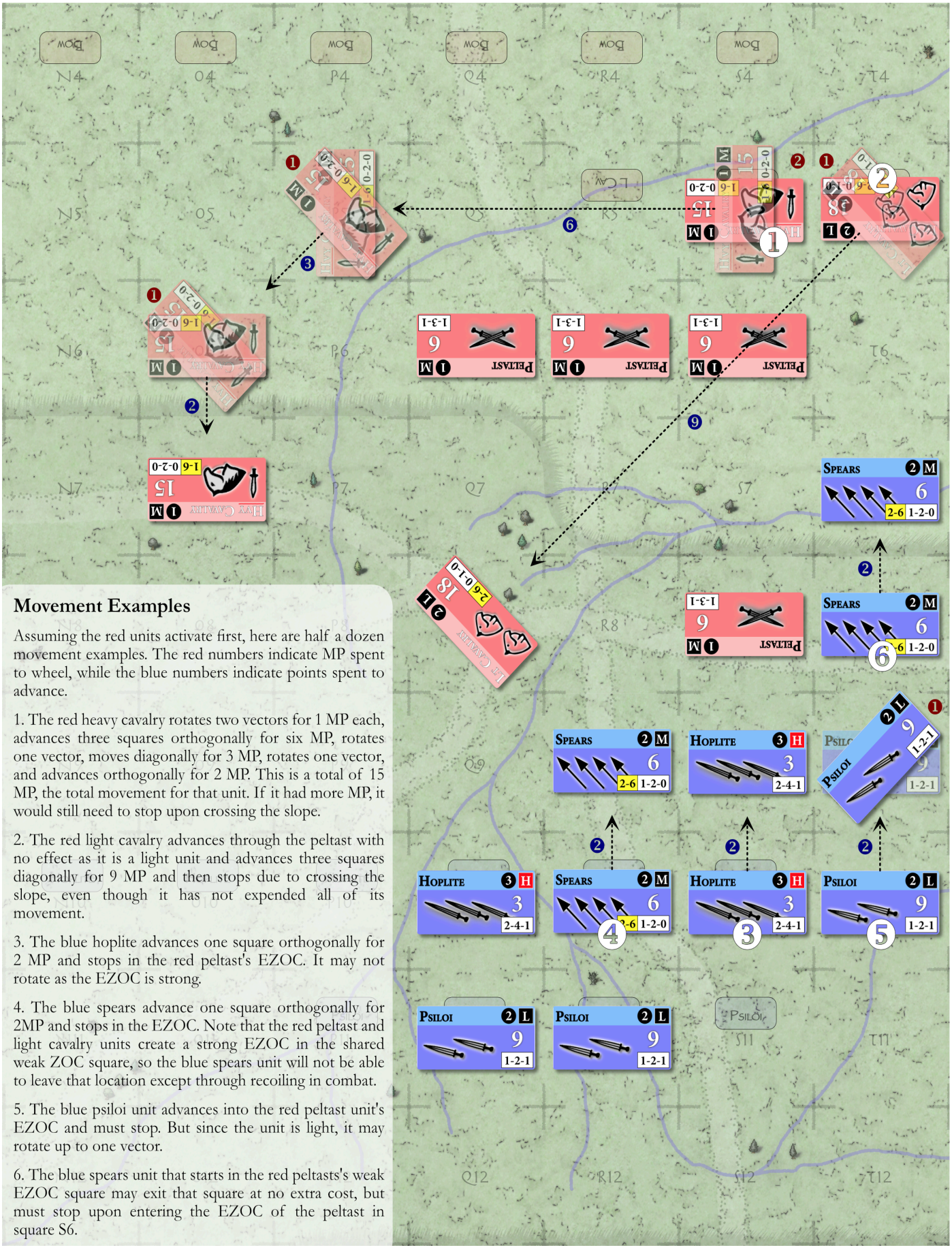
7.3 **Occupied Squares** – Units may not enter a square occupied by an enemy unit. The ability to move through friendly units is dependent upon the size of the moving and stationary units.

7.3.1 **Light Units** – A light unit may move through a friendly occupied square and any friendly unit may move through a light unit without consequence.

7.3.2 **Medium Units** – A medium unit may move through another medium unit, but both units are automatically disrupted, if not disrupted already. A medium unit may not enter a heavy unit's square.

7.3.3 **Heavy Units** – A heavy unit may not enter another heavy unit's square. A heavy unit may enter a medium unit's square through displacement.

7.3.4 **Displacement** – A unit that wishes to *end* its movement in a friendly unit's square may do so only if it is larger in size (a heavy unit displaces a medium unit, both heavy and medium units may displace a light unit). The stationary unit being displaced is "pushed" into an adjacent square (even the one the moving unit came from), while retaining its current facing. The displaced unit is then flipped to its disrupted side, if not already disrupted. A unit may not be displaced into an EZOC. If unable to displace a non-ordered unit, its square may not be occupied.



Movement Examples

Assuming the red units activate first, here are half a dozen movement examples. The red numbers indicate MP spent to wheel, while the blue numbers indicate points spent to advance.

1. The red heavy cavalry rotates two vectors for 1 MP each, advances three squares orthogonally for six MP, rotates one vector, moves diagonally for 3 MP, rotates one vector, and advances orthogonally for 2 MP. This is a total of 15 MP, the total movement for that unit. If it had more MP, it would still need to stop upon crossing the slope.

2. The red light cavalry advances through the peltast with no effect as it is a light unit and advances three squares diagonally for 9 MP and then stops due to crossing the slope, even though it has not expended all of its movement.

3. The blue hoplite advances one square orthogonally for 2 MP and stops in the red peltast's EZOC. It may not rotate as the EZOC is strong.

4. The blue spears advance one square orthogonally for 2MP and stops in the EZOC. Note that the red peltast and light cavalry units create a strong EZOC in the shared weak ZOC square, so the blue spears unit will not be able to leave that location except through recoiling in combat.

5. The blue psiloi unit advances into the red peltast unit's EZOC and must stop. But since the unit is light, it may rotate up to one vector.

6. The blue spears unit that starts in the red peltasts's weak EZOC square may exit that square at no extra cost, but must stop upon entering the EZOC of the peltast in square S6.

7.4 **Voluntary Disruption** – Dense and Flexible Density units may voluntarily disrupt (flip) at no cost in order to move more quickly. This disruption occurs when the unit is initially activated to move. In order to return to good order, a unit disrupted in this manner must undergo the Rally process as noted below (see 11.0).

7.5 **Terrain Effects** – Each map square includes some kind of terrain. Generally, terrain does not affect a unit's movement rate (a unit need not spend extra movement points to enter). However, some terrain types will force a unit to halt movement entirely upon entry, and/or may cause a good order unit to disrupt (be flipped to its reverse side). Note the appropriate effects on the Terrain Effects Chart.

8.0 RANGED COMBAT

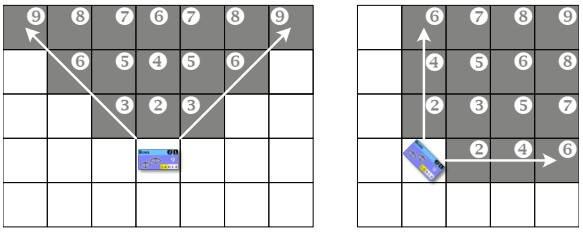
Certain units are noted as capable of missile fire. These are noted with the combat unit's ranged attack strength and the maximum distance at which they are effective. This distance is measured in directional points. Terrain may impact the effective range of a missile capable unit. In order to fire at a target, the missile unit must have a clear line of sight (LOS) to it.

8.1 **EZOC Effects** – A unit capable of ranged fire may only do so if not occupying an EZOC.

8.2 **Range** – Each unit capable of ranged missile fire is noted with a maximum range, in directional points, to a potential target. If the number of directional points from the firing unit to the target unit's square (not including the effect of terrain) exceeds this number, the target is out of range. Otherwise, the firing unit may attack through ranged combat.

8.3 **Line of Sight (LOS)** – When firing at a non-adjacent unit, the attacker must be able to see the target. Any intervening combat units or terrain (town, woods, and hills) may block this view. Count the shortest distance to the target in directional points. If any of the intervening squares crossed by this sequence of squares contain combat units, town, woods, or slope terrain, the LOS to the target is blocked and the target may not be attacked. If more than one route to the target can be determined at the same cost in directional points, the defender determines the path takenm.

8.4 **Arc of Fire** – Ranged fire is only effective when the target is within a 90-degree arc extending through the firing unit's three front squares (see the diagram). If the desired target is not within this arc of fire, the firing unit may rotate until the target is within this arc. However, each point of rotation provides an additional defensive die roll favoring the target. After firing, the unit retains its new facing.



NOTE: *The diagram above shows the arc of fire for units facing either a square side or a vertex. The number in each box is the number of directional points it takes to reach a target unit in those locations.*

8.5 **Resolving Missile Fire** – To resolve missile fire, follow the steps outlined below.

8.5.1 **Attack Strength** – Select one or more attacking units from the active formation. Sum the fire strength values for those units that are within range and LOS of the target unit. Each unit's fire strength (the left number in the yellow box) represents the number of attack dice rolled when resolving combat. Additional attack dice may be derived from play of events. Roll all of the attack dice together. Any modified rolls of 1 or 2 results in a hit.

8.5.2 **Defense Reduction** – The target rolls a number of dice equal to its missile defense number (the black circled number at the top of the unit), in addition to dice gained from the terrain occupied, rotation of the attacking unit, any event cards played. Any modified result of 5 or 6 cancels an attacking hit (as if that successful attacking die roll were a miss).

8.5.3 **Attack Results** – Subtract the defensive cancellations from the attacking hits to determine the number of hits sustained by the defending combat unit. The first (undefended) hit disrupts a good-order target unit. Flip the unit to its disrupted side. The first hit on a disrupted unit or any additional hits beyond the first cause step losses to a dense or flexible unit on a one-for-one basis. Each hit that cannot be absorbed by a disruption or a step loss results in a rout check. Since light and medium unit types do not sustain step losses, each hit following disruption results in a rout check. If the check passes, the unit recoils back one square to its immediate rear or adjacent rear square, adjusting its facing away from the square vacated. If the roll fails or if the unit cannot fall back due to the presence of EZOCs or friendly units that cannot be displaced, the unit routs (9.4.10) instead. Note that regardless of the number of passed checks, a single attack only causes a unit to recoil one square.

8.6 **Ranged Fire Limits** – A defending unit may only be the target of a single ranged attack during that action. Similarly, attacking units may only target an enemy unit once per action, although multiple attacking units may target the same defending unit.

9.0 Melee Combat

As part of an action, a good order unit may attempt to engage any enemy unit in one of its front squares in melee combat.

9.1 **Melee Limits** – If an enemy unit occupies the square directly in front of an active unit, the active unit may only attack that enemy unit. An enemy unit may be attacked by multiple units simultaneously (provided that the "supporting" units do not have enemy units in their directly frontal square), but an attacking unit may only attack once and a defender may only be attacked once during a single action.

9.2 **Morale Defense** – Each combat unit has a morale defense modifier printed on its unit marker. There are three numbers separated by hyphens. The first number is used when being attacked from a left flank square. The second number is used when being attacked from any frontal square. The third number is used when attacked from a right flank square. These values represent an additional number of dice the attacker must roll when attempting to enter melee.

9.3 **Combat Strength** – In melee combat, both sides are trying to eliminate each other, so both sides roll combat dice. The number of dice rolled is based upon the unit's size. A light unit rolls one die. A medium unit rolls two dice. A heavy unit rolls three dice. Additionally, dense and flexible units roll a number of additional dice equal to their rank marker. When rolling melee dice, 1s and 2s are considered hits, while 5s and 6s are cancellations.

NOTE*: Since both units are trying as best as they can to push forward (even while on the defensive), both units can cause damage to the enemy while also trying to minimize damage to themselves. Where a unit's efforts lay on this spectrum is noted by how many 1s, 2s, 5s, and 6s are rolled.*

9.4 **Melee Process** – Completion of melee requires following this sequence:

9.4.1 **Attack Declaration** – The active player selects a unit (or units) to engage in melee and specifies the target unit occupying one of the attacker's front squares.

9.4.2 **Retreat Before Melee** – Light units may retreat prior to melee combat. Any good order Light infantry units may retreat prior to combat when facing Medium or Heavy infantry. Light cavalry units may retreat prior to combat when facing any unit other than another Light cavalry unit. Units may not retreat into an EZOC. A Light unit retreating before combat is automatically disordered. A retreating unit is flipped to its disrupted side and moves two squares away from the enemy unit. Rotate the unit to face away from the last square exited. See 9.4.10 if the attacking unit advances.

9.4.3 **Melee Commitment** – Attacking units occupying a good order target's front and flank squares must make morale rolls, modified by the morale modifier of the unit being attacked (even if a zero). If a roll fails, that unit may not attack. If only one unit is attacking the sequence is aborted, otherwise each attacking unit must make a morale check. A unit that passes its morale check is marked with a Melee marker. Morale check die rolls are automatically successful for units stacked with a leader and are otherwise modified as noted below. These modifiers are cumulative. Each unit that makes its roll must attack in melee.

9.4.3.1 **Leader Adjacency** – Morale rolls are reduced by two when adjacent to a friendly leader.

9.4.3.2 **Leader Nearby** – Morale rolls are reduced by one if two squares from a friendly leader

9.4.3.3 **Unit Size** – Morale rolls are reduced by one when a heavy or medium unit is attacking a light unit.

9.4.3.4 **Unit Type** – Immortals always reduce morale rolls by one when attempting to enter melee.

9.4.3.5 **Morale Adjustment** – Morale rolls may also be modified *after* they have been rolled through the expenditure of Morale Commitment points provided by action cards held by the players.

9.4.3.6 **Subsequent Morale Checks** – Units that are marked with Melee markers do not need to make a morale check to enter melee (even across turns), provided that their previous action was melee. A melee marker is removed from any marked unit that does not or cannot participate in melee during that action.

EXAMPLE*: A 3 Action card was drawn and the first action is taken for melee. A unit passing its morale check does not have to check morale again if the second action is used to melee with the same unit. However, if the second action were taken to do some other action or activate a different formation, a third action taken to melee with those units activated during the first action would need to roll again.*

9.4.3.7 **Disrupted Targets** – Disrupted units do not exert a ZOC, and therefore do not require a melee roll to engage.

9.4.4 **Combat Dice** – Both sides determine the number of dice rolled during melee. By default, the number of dice rolled is dependent upon the size of the unit. Heavy, Medium, and Light units roll three, two, or one die/dice, respectively. Additional dice are added as noted below, with a maximum of eight dice being rolled at any time.

9.4.4.1 **Attack Vectors** – The direction from which an attacking unit strikes a defender impacts the effectiveness of both the attacker's and the defender's performance in melee. These bonuses and penalties are applied so long as at least one attacking unit is attacking from a noted position. The effects are

not cumulative, however, so a unit's benefit for attacking from a flank is ignored if another friendly unit is attacking from a rear square.

A) Flank – If the attacker strikes from a defender's flank square, add an additional die to the attack strength and defensive hits only strike on 1s (2s are misses).

B) Rear – If the attacker strikes from a defender's rear square, add an additional die to the attack strength, while defensive hits are ignored.

9.4.4.2 **Terrain** – Units occupying certain terrain types may be affected when engaged in melee. Fighting within poor terrain typically provides the unit's opponent with additional dice in combat and/or may provide die roll modifiers. Note the proper effects on the Terrain Effects Chart.

9.4.4.3 **Immortals** – Units of the type "Immortals" gain one additional die when attacking, only. Immortals roll three dice when attacking and two when defending.

9.4.4.4 **Multiple Attackers** – When multiple attacking units are able to attack the same unit, the attacker must select a "lead unit." By default, this unit is the one in the square toward which the defender is directly facing. If there is no attacker in this square, the main unit must occupy one of the defender's other two frontal squares. If these are empty as well, the attacker may select any other unit to be the lead unit. All other attacking units are "supporting" units. Supporting units only add their base strength (one, two, or three dice dependent upon size, even if they have more ranks than the lead unit). When receiving defensive hits, the lead unit always receives the first hit. Additional hits are distributed evenly among other attacking units, with the lead unit always receiving an "odd" hit (e.g., if two attackers, the first, third, fifth, etc. hits … if three attackers, the first, fourth, seventh, etc. hits … and so on.).

9.4.4.5 **Disrupted Units** – Disrupted may not initiate combat, but may be the target of it. When acting defensively, a disrupted unit ignores all defensive "hit" die rolls, but applies cancellations normally.

9.4.4.6 **Event Cards** – Some event cards provide one or more additional dice on the offense or defense. The non-initiative player declares any cards used before the initiative player, who may opt to play or not play cards.

9.4.5 **Resolve the Melee** – Both sides roll a number of dice based upon their size, ranks, support, vector, type, and the play of any event cards. Rolls of 1s and 2s are considered "hits," unless otherwise prescribed by the rules, while rolls of 5 or 6 are considered cancellations of opposing hits. The most dice either side can roll is *eight*, regardless of bonuses.

9.4.6 **Melee Re-rolls** – A player may re-roll combat dice. Any dice may be re-rolled, but the result of a re-roll trumps the original roll. The re-rolls may be done simultaneously (making all re-rolls at once), in sequence (re-rolling the same die once per opportunity), or a combination (re-rolling two dice and then re-rolling one of those results). A player may only re-roll his or her own dice, unless specified otherwise.

9.4.6.1 **Leaders** – The presence of a friendly leader in the melee allows one die to be re-rolled (so both players could feasibly re-roll one of their combat dice). If multiple friendly leaders are involved in the combat, each may re-roll a die.

9.4.6.2 **Attacker** – The attacker may always re-roll any one die. All attacker hits are applied against the defending unit. Defending hits are applied as evenly as possible against the units in front squares, with the lead unit taking the first and most hits.

9.4.7 **Apply Hits** – Reduce the number of hits for both the attacker and the defender by the opponent's cancellations. The balance of the hits are applied to each side (defender first), depending upon the density of the unit being hit (open, dense, or flexible):

9.4.7.1 **Open** – The first hit disrupts a good order unit and the second hit causes a recoil. The first hit forces a disrupted unit to recoil. Any subsequent hits following a recoil are converted to the same number of rout check dice. A good order unit taking four hits would roll two rout check dice. A failure of any of these rolls results in the unit routing.

EXAMPLE: *A good-order peltast unit suffers three hits. The first hit flips the unit to its disrupted side. The second hit forces the peltast to recoil. The third hit forces the unit to make a rout check. If the peltast were already disrupted, the first hit would cause it to recoil, and it would have to make two rout checks.*

9.4.7.2 **Dense** – The first hit disrupts a good order unit. Any subsequent hits eliminate steps until only one step remains (the unit itself). A hit on a single-step unit forces it to recoil and any subsequent hits are treated as rout checks. A failure of any of these rolls results in the unit routing.

EXAMPLE: *A good order hoplite with three ranks (the unit itself plus a +2 rank marker) suffers five hits. The first hit disrupts the hoplite. The second and third hits convert the +2 rank marker to a +0, leaving the hoplite itself. The fourth hit forces the hoplite to recoil. The fifth hit causes a rout check. Had the unit already been disrupted, it would have to make two rout checks.*

9.4.7.3 **Flexible** – A flexible unit ignores the first number of hits equal to its number of steps. The first hit beyond this amount disrupts the unit if in good-order. Any additional hits result in step losses until only the unit's final step remains. A hit on a single-step unit forces it to recoil and any subsequent hits

are treated as rout checks. A failure of any of these rolls results in the unit routing.

EXAMPLE: *A maniple with three ranks (the unit itself plus a +2 rank marker) suffers five hits. The first, second, and third hit are ignored. The fourth hit disrupts the maniple. The fifth hit reduces the rank marker to +1. Had the unit already been disrupted, its rank marker would be reduced to +0, leaving the maniple unit without additional ranks. Any additional hits would cause the maniple to recoil and possibly check for rout.*

9.4.8 **Recoiling** – As a result of combat, a unit may be forced to leave its square to get away from an opposing unit. Units always recoil one square. When both the attacking and defending units must recoil, the defender does so first. The attacker then makes a morale check on a single die and must recoil as well on a failed result.

9.4.8.1 **Restrictions** – A unit may never recoil into an EZOC. A unit unable to recoil due to the presence of EZOCs is eliminated (not routed). A unit that recoils off the map is eliminated.

9.4.8.2 **Procedure** – To recoil a unit, follow these steps:

1. Rotate the recoiling unit so that the attacking unit occupies the recoiling unit's center-rear square.
2. If possible, advance the unit directly forward (including into a friendly-occupied square).
3. If unable to advance directly forward, advance into either other front square. Adjust the unit's facing to face directly away from the square exited.
4. If unable to advance into any frontal square, advance into any other square. Adjust the unit's facing to face directly away from the square exited.

9.4.8.3 **Traffic** – If a unit is forced to recoil into a friendly square, the unit recoils through those units to the nearest square that can accommodate it, using the same procedure outlined above. If forced to move through good order units during a recoil, those units are automatically disordered unless either the recoiling unit or the blocking unit is light. If forced to recoil more than one square due to the presence of EZOCs or friendly units, each additional square moved causes a rout check.

NOTE*: Recoiling is not the same thing as movement and therefore not subject to those mechanics that may restrict normal movement.*

9.4.9 **Advance** – Following any retreat, recoil, or rout, a good order, (lead) attacking unit that was not disrupted itself must advance into the vacated square, unless stacked with a leader (in which case it has the option to advance) or if the enemy unit exited the map. *Note Cavalry Continuation, below.* A unit advancing out of its square must rotate (if necessary) so that its rear faces the exited square. It may then rotate one point in either direction if desired.

9.4.10 **Routing** – Any hit that a unit cannot sustain without elimination or any friendly occupied square moved through during recoil results in a rout check. For each such hit, make an unmodified morale check. If a leader is in the square with the unit that is checking for rout (even if it just entered the leader's square during a recoil), reduce the number of rout check die rolls by one (even if there is only one). If any check fails, remove the unit and place it in the Routed Units box of the Rout Resolution chart. Routed units are not immediately eliminated. Their fate is determined during the Rout Management phase of the game turn. See 6.3 for the effect upon leaders.

9.4.11 **Cavalry Continuation** – If a unit is recoiled by a cavalry attack and the cavalry unit advances, it may attack again following a morale check. This attack is not mandatory. A morale roll failure does not halt this combat. If the roll fails, the attack is resolved normally, and then the attacking cavalry unit is disrupted. As long as the cavalry unit remains in good order and the target continues to recoil, the cavalry unit can continue to attack it until the target has been chased off the map. Any units chased off the map in this fashion are considered eliminated and may not return to play under any circumstance (adjust the Army Loss track). The presence of a leader with the attacking unit does not automatically allow the unit to pass its morale check in this situation. In these cases, the leader has no effect on the continuation morale roll. A cavalry unit that chases an enemy unit off the map is moved to the "rallied units" box on the rout management track. If it cannot be placed during the subsequent rout management step, move it into the "routed units" box.

10.0 Disruption

The first hit that a good order unit sustains in combat results in its disruption. This is shown by flipping the unit over to its reverse side (while maintaining the same facing). When flipped, the capabilities of a unit will change.

10.1 **Zone of Control** – Disrupted do not exert a ZOC. If sharing a weak ZOC square with another unit to create a strong ZOC, that square immediately reverts to a weak ZOC upon one of the units being disrupted.

10.2 **Melee Combat** – Disrupted units may not initiate combat and do not cause hits (but do cancel hits) when acting defensively. Disrupted units do not have morale modifiers (so units attacking them from any direction do not have to first make a morale check).

10.3 **Recovery** – A unit is returned to its "good order" side through Rally (below).

11.0 Rally

A formation may be activated to Rally. Rallying a unit entails flipping it from its disrupted side to its good order side. A unit activated individually (not as part of a larger formation) is automatically restored. Any unit stacked with a leader is automatically restored when rallied. Any other unit within a formation being rallied must make a successful morale check, modified as noted below. These modifiers are cumulative. A unit that successfully rallies is flipped to its good order side and may be rotated to face any direction.

11.1 **Leader Adjacent** – A unit adjacent to a commander's square *subtracts* one from its die roll.

11.2 **Immortal Units** – Immortal units *subtract* one from their die rolls.

11.3 **Enemy ZOC** – Any unit in an EZOC *adds* one to the die roll.

12.0 Camps

Each side typically begins a battle with a camp in its rear area. This is where the army's baggage and camp followers are located, and is a rallying point for routing units. Camps are managed through the following rules:

1. Camps do not count towards the stacking limits of a square.

2. Camps are immune to ranged attacks.

3. Any units in a Camp square must be routed or eliminated before the Camp sustains any hits.

3. Camps cancel the first hit scored against them or a unit stacked on them in melee.

4. Camps are considered heavy units for defensive purposes. Camps do not disrupt. If they take a hit in melee, flip the unit to its reverse side. Decrease the owning army's rout level by one. Apply a +1 penalty to all morale checks going forward. Remove the attacking unit from the game, but do not adjust the enemy's army loss marker.

13.0 Shield Walls

Some armies employed the "shield wall" tactic to support a defensive position. This involved a force of infantry interlocking the edges of their shields to create an impenetrable barrier. A battle's special rules indicate if one or both sides may employ this tactic.

13.1 **Creation** – To create a shield wall, there may be no gaps in the formation employing it (each unit must be adjacent to at least one other unit in the formation). A single unit may create a shield wall. Place a wall marker on each unit employing a shield wall.

13.2 **Effects** – Shield walls have the following effects:

1. Units so marked may not move (nor retreat prior to or advance following melee),

2. increase their morale by one,

3. increase their ranged combat defense by one,

4. increase their melee dice by one when being attacked, and

5. add one to all melee die rolls.

13.3 **Removal** – A unit may voluntarily remove a shield marker as part of movement by spending one movement point. A shield marker is removed as part of combat when a marked unit is disrupted. If forced to recoil or make rout checks, the marker is removed after recoils, and rout checks are resolved (i.e. the effects of the shield wall remain until the end of the current unit's action).

14.0 Scenarios

The scenarios provided with the game are the individual, historical battles to be played out. Each is provided with historical background for context, and several features that are needed for setup and play.

14.1 **Setup** – Prior to starting, players will need to lay the map out on a flat surface. Place the combat units based upon color and combat unit type in the spaces indicated. The units should face in the same direction as the unit notation on the map (i.e., the text of both should be facing the same direction). Leaders are described by their attributes (rank, command range, command value) and the color of their command rank. Leaders may set up in any square occupied by a friendly unit. Deal a number of cards to each player equal to the command value of the overall commander, plus one.

14.2 **Dense/Flexible Steps** – The scenario notes the number of ranks that should set up with each dense or flexible units. Additionally, a limit to the number of steps that can be added to a unit is also noted, in case players want to experiment with how their dense or flexible units are deployed.

EXAMPLE*: "Hoplite Steps: +1 rank per unit at start, adjustable to +3 max per unit." This means that each Hoplite unit begins with a "Rank +1" density marker. However, players may adjust the hoplite ranks as they see fit, but limited to three additional ranks to a unit. For instance, if six hoplites were available, three ranks could be applied to two hoplites, with +0 markers given to the remainder.*

14.3 **Leaders** – The names of the leaders accompanying each army. Select the appropriate leader counter based upon the values shown. The color noted indicates the color of the box around the leader's command value. Each leader must be placed with a combat unit.

14.4 **Impulses** – This is the number of impulses that an army starts with. This value might be reduced by the loss of leaders or camps.

14.4 **Rout Level** – The is the total number of losses (eliminated units and each eliminated rank) an army can sustain before the army routs. If either army has sustained a number of losses equal to this number, the game ends. Both armies could feasibly rout on the same turn.

14.5 **Special Rules** – These may be one or more rules specific to the battle being played. These rules supersede and may contradict the standard rules.

14.1 Marathon

By the turn of the 4th Century BCE, the Persian Empire had spread its girth far and wide across the ancient world with Darius I (the Great), at its head. As powerful as the empire was, its periphery, which ranged from India in the east to northern Greece in the west, was in nearly constant turmoil. Most recently, the Ionian Revolt (498 to 494 BCE) threatened control of Persia's far west holdings as far as the Bosphorus. Despite the relative ease at putting down the revolt, it had an added effect of focusing the eyes of the emperor on Greece and, in particular, the Athenian city-state, from which much of the unrest originated and that was just beyond Persian reach.

Following the Ionian Revolt, Darius felt it was time to bring Athens into the empire and launched an expedition under the command of his son-in-law, Mardonius. The expedition came to ruin as the Persian fleet was caught in a storm near the Athos promontory. The fleet was smashed to pieces and most of the crews eaten by sea monsters (or so the survivors reported). Without naval support and supply, the land portion of Mardonius' forces were picked apart by ambushing tribes, and ultimately forced to withdraw back to Asia.

In 490 BCE, Darius ordered a second expedition to capture Athens. This time under the generalship of Datis, a nobleman of reputation, who would be seconded by Darius' own nephew, Artaphernes. Regardless of the appearance of nepotism in this decision, Artaphernes was familiar with the geography of eastern Greece as his father had been a satrap in the western empire. The two commanders began their march with a standard Persian regiment of 10,000 infantry. By the time they reached and sieged the city of Eretria, north of Athens, the army's ranks had swollen with troops from allied tribes to nearly 25,000, plus 1,000 cavalry. Once Eretria had fallen, Datis was in position to march on Athens itself.

While Eretria burned, the Athenians were not idle. In fact, a large contingent of soldiers from the city-state has been compelled by treaty to come to Eretrian aid when the Persians arrived, but to little effect. The first decision the Athenians made was to send a herald, Phidippides, to the Spartans to request their aid. Arriving in just under a day, he entreated with the Spartans for help, but they would not be able to provided it until the conclusion of their on-going religious observances. Once the full-moon had risen, the Spartans would march. The Athenians would be on their own for a week, while the Persian host bore down on them.

A group of ten nobles were assigned to see to the defense of Athens. Once of these was Miltiades, who had once been employed as a commander in the Persian army, but

may not have been quite as knowledgeable in Persian army operations as he claimed. Given his Greek birth, the Persians only trusted him to menial command responsibilities. The council of ten nominated Callimachus as the "war commander" for the army, a duty that would rotate between council members. The remaining nine nobles, Miltiades included, would advise on the course of action. The council was roughly split between taking an offensive or defensive stance against the Persians, but Miltiades managed to convince Callimachus to move to confront the Persians before the will to resist their invasion crumbled within the city-state. The Athenians moved out with 10,000 hoplites.

Both armies arrived on the plain of Marathon, with the Aegean coast on their eastern flanks. Both armies settled down for a staring match over the course of several days, as neither commander felt comfortable in breaking up their formations during an advance and leaving their army's vulnerable to attack during reformation. This was fine for the Athenians, as every day the Persians waited was another day closer to the arrival of the Spartans. The Athenians could afford to wait as they straddled the road to Athens, blocking the Persian advance. But, eventually, command of the Athenian forces fell to Miltiades, and he wasn't about waiting.

On the morning of battle, Miltiades addressed the impressive length of the Persian line by weakening the Athenian hoplites in the center from the typical eight ranks to four and stretching the Athenian line as far out as possible. The hoplites on the left and right wings of the army retained their typical strength. Once the army was properly arrayed, Miltiades ordered a double-time march across the plain and into the Persian line that was still coming together in the face of the charging enemy. When the two forces clashed, the Athenian wings maintained their cohesion, but the Athenian center whose weakened state allowed the Persian antagonists to provide a more effective push, began to give way. The middle of the Athenian line crumbled, with Persians in pursuit. Fortunately, however, the Athenian wings that were at full strength crushed the Persian wings and then joined together into a swing behind the Persian center, effectively surrounding and destroying it.

According to Herodotus, the Persians lost 6,400 dead to 192 dead Athenians. Also lost was Callimachus, who had led the Athenian right wing to victory. Datis escaped with the remains of his army. Following the loss, Darius doubled-down on building another army to subjugate the Athenians, but revolts elsewhere in the empire cancelled this plan. Darius dies before being able to claim Athens.

In light of the Athenian success at Marathon, one important questions still lingers to this day. Where were the 1,000 Persian cavalry? It seems clear that if the cavalry were on the field when the Athenian center has begun to collapse, the cavalry could have taken up the job of harassing the survivors as it typically did, rather than having the Persian infantry pursue. This would have allowed the Persian central infantry turn to face the closing Athenian wings and perhaps limit the damage if not actually turn the tide against the Athenians. But, history shows that the Persian cavalry played no part in the battle. The best theory behind the absence is an assumption that while the Athenian army was engaged with the Persians, another force of Persians (including the cavalry) was on ships and doing an end-run to attack a now defenseless Athens. In any case, this follow-up strike never happened and the threat against Athens was diminished … at least for ten years and the arrival of Xerxes.

Greek (Blue) Setup

Hoplite Steps: +1 rank per unit at start, adjustable of +3 max per unit

Leaders: Miltiades (1-9-3/Red),

Callimachus (2-4-3/Red)

Impulses: 3

Rout Level: 7 units

Persian (Red) Setup

Hoplite Steps: +1 rank per unit at start, no adjustments

Leaders: Datis (1-6-3/White),

Artaphernes (2-4-2/White)

Impulses: 3

Rout Level: 7 units

Special Rules

1. The Greeks begin holding the initiative.
2. Treat the river/stream at the top of the map as River terrain.

14.2 THERMOPYLAE

The largest army the world had ever seen. This is what Xerxes, son of Darius the Great, would assemble as a weapon to crush the two thorns in the side of the Persian Empire, the Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta. These had been the source of diplomatic and military trouble for the past two decades (or more) fomenting the Ionian Revolt at the turn of the 4th Century BCE that ultimately let to the Persian's ignominious defeat at Marathon.

Drawing strength from all over the empire, Xerxes ordered the creation of his massive army of over 100,000 while sending entreaties to Greek tribes and cities to join his empire. There was no need to threaten as the danger of non-compliance was clearly implied. Only Athens and Sparta were spared from these entreaties. There would be no diplomacy. They would simply be crushed.

The Greeks immediately responded by sending 10,000 hoplites north to the border between Thessaly and Macedonia, but is was quickly determined that their position was easily circumvented and so the Greek forces fell back to Corinth to find a better defensive position. The Greeks decided on two bottleneck positions, one was by sea, in a channel created by the island of Euboea. The other was a narrow gap in the mountainous costal area called Thermopylae. Guard-

ing this gap would keep the Persians from reaching Boetia, another source of supply. The Greeks dispatched what troops they could: roughly 7,000 hoplites from a variety of nearby regions led by Spartan king Leonidas and 300 of his own Spartans.

By some estimates, the allied Greeks were outnumbered by nearly thirty to one, although it's likely that this ratio has been greatly exaggerated. In any case, the Persians significantly outnumbered the Greeks, but this advantage was cancelled by the fact that no more than a hundred soldiers could be engaged at a time in the pass. The Greeks could easily swap out forces to ensure that defense of the gap was perpetually fresh throughout the day. But there was a major problem that soon became evident to Leonidas. There was a little-known goat path that led through the mountains and opened up behind the Greek position. This path had been used twenty years before by invading Thessalians to circumvent a force of defending Phocians, forcing the latter to retreat. Leonidas plugged this gap with 1,000 Phocian allies, to defend against a flanking maneuver. Leonidas and his 300 Spartans would defend the main entrance into the pass, hoping to hold the Persians off long enough for reinforcements to arrive. Like Marathon ten years earlier, Sparta would not send a large army until the end of the on-going Carneia festival. Spartans were a very devout civilization, and acting counter to the gods was not acceptable.

It would seem that the gods were with the Spartans as the Persian fleet, whose progress was being delayed by a substantial Athenian navy, was caught in a three-day gale on the unprotected coast of Thessaly and smashed to splinters. Xerxes assembled what was left in an effort to circumvent the pass by sea, but his fleet was intercepted by a smaller, but capably led Athenian navy that managed to halt its advance. Certainly Xerxes was aware of the time he had to breach the gap before hundreds if not thousands more enemy forces would arrive in defense against his advances. He had little choice but meet the 300 Spartans head-on.

The battle took place over the course of three days. On the first day, the Persians were met and soundly repelled by the Spartan defenders. It is assumed that some time late during the first day or early the second that Xerxes was informed of the goat path by the traitorous Midian, Ephialtes. By nightfall on the second day, the Persian Immortals were on their way to the path. Early on the third day, news of the advancing Immortals reached the Greek allies. What happened next is still a matter for speculation. Either a good portion of the Greeks simply abandoned their positions, or they were ordered to retreat by Leonidas. In either case, the Spartans opted to stay and fight to the end, with the support of a force of Thespians as well as a batch of Thebans who, when all was over but the shouting, claimed they were unwilling conscripts.

By the end of the battle, the Greeks had advanced out of the defile to gain more space in which to fight and dealt heavy losses to the Persians. The Greeks fought literally tooth-and-nail until the final man was killed. When Leonidas finally fell, the remaining Spartans pushed forward several times in an effort to recover his body.

After three days of heavy fighting, and losses potentially numbering in the thousands, the Persians had breached the pass at Thermopylae and were on their way to Athens, whose fate was all be sealed. Within a month's time, Xerxes would order the city of Athens to be put to the torch.

Greek (Blue) Setup

Hoplite Steps: +1 rank per unit at start, adjustable of +2 max per unit.

Leaders: Leonidas (1-6-3/Red), Demophilus (2-4-3/White)

Impulses: 3

Rout Level: 5 units

Persian (Red) Setup

Leaders: Xerxes (1-6-3/White), Mardonius (2-4-2/White)

Impulses: 3

Rout Level: 8 units

Special Rules

1. The Persians begin holding the initiative.
2. Hill terrain, with the sole exception of R15 and the Goat Path, is not passible. All slope restrictions apply. The Phocian Wall square side is impassible. Diagonal movement is not possible between squares on either side of the Phocian Wall to squares S11 and S12 if a combat unit (of either side) occupies S11 or S12.
3. After determining initiative, the Persian player rolls a die. If the result is less than or equal to the current turn, the goat path through the mountains has been discovered. Until the path is discovered, no Persian unit may move past map Column K.
4. When the goat path has been discovered, Persian units may advance along it. Units may not make any diagonal moves while along the path (including from B3 or D3 to C4 as well as O15 to P16). Greek units may never move along the goat path.
5. If Xerxes is killed, the Greeks immediately win a major victory at the end of the turn. If the Greek camp is sacked, the Persians immediately win a major victory at the end of the turn. If both of these occur on the same turn, the Greeks win a minor victory by default (yes, Xerxes is dead, but there's still a heck of a Persian army led by capable commanders heading right for Athens!). If the Persians have not won by the end of the game, the Greeks win a minor victory.

14.3 Plataea

In 480 BCE, a massive Persian army under the god-king Xerxes was hammering its way down the eastern Greek coast, on its way to subjugate the city-states of Athens and Sparta. In order to move and supply this huge force, Xerxes relayed upon a large navy that would follow and leap-frog the progress of his land-based infantry. Unfortunately, weather and a small, but extraordinarily tenacious Athenian fleet stalled the Persian fleet's advance, inflicting heavy losses in ships, supplies, and manpower. The fate of the Persian fleet's remains was sealed at the naval battle of Salamis where a reinforced Athenian fleet crushed what remained of the Persians naval force. The land-based contingent was now on its own, needing to draw supply from what it could locally. Given its size, the huge army continued to trundle forward, but without Xerxes himself. Xerxes had been advised to return to Asia before antagonistic forces in northern Greece or enemy fleets could burn the bridges over the Bosphorus. Xerxes agreed and handed control of a portion of the Persian army to a general named Mardonius, who would continue to plan to subjugate the rest of Greece.

Once Xerxes returned to Asia, the remains of Athens were reoccupied and rebuilding began during the winter between 480 and 479 BCE. The loss of much of the Persian force in northern Greece had caused something of a stalemate between the Greeks and the Persians, which Mardonius attempted to resolve by bribing the Athenians with land and self-government. The Athenians pithily refused. Mardonius burned Athens again.

It seemed clear that Mardonius would need to bring the Athenians and their allies to the battlefield where they could be defeated once and for all. He moved his army to an open plain in Boetia near the town of Plataea.

The Athenians called for reinforcements from their allied states, but were brushed off by the Spartans, again due to the timing of their religious observances. In a near fit of pique, Athenian emissaries demanded that the Spartan armies join with them, otherwise all of Greece would fall. To their surprise, the Spartan elders ("ephors") informed them that a Spartan army was already on the march to meet Mardonius.

The Greek allies met the Persians on the plain near Plataea, where they sat in a stare down, much like Marathon, each trying to goad the other into attacking, but neither taking the bait. One of the efforts on the part of the Persians was to reach a spring used as a water source by the Greeks and plug it up. This forced a good portion of the Greek army to retreat back toward Plataea. This maneuver was attempted at night, which caused confusion and left part of the Greek army too far forward. Mardonius, finding that the Greeks were now in some disarray, took the opportunity to attack.

As Mardonius moved the cream of the Persian army forward, the remainder followed as well. This led to a contingent of Theban hoplites running directly into a force of Athenian hoplites that had not retreated as expected, causing a gap in the Persian line that could be exploited. During the course of the battle, the Athenians and the Thebans remained engaged until the Thebans finally withdrew of their own accord. Mardonius, on his own left, met the Spartan contingent under the Spartan king Pausanias. The Spartans had nailed themselves to higher ground and refused to move due to unfortunate bad omens, but more likely in fear of marching into an arrow storm provided by the Persians. Rather than take advantage of this defensive tactic, Mardonius marched up hill, head-on toward the Spartan hoplites. With the Persians on the move, the Spartans also moved to meet them (presumably Pausanias received some good omens at that point). When the two clashed, the superior numbers of the Persians could not withstand the better armed and arrayed Spartans. The fighting was fierce and protracted. Finally, Mardonius, who was urging his forces on horseback at the center of the melee was struck down by a Spartan missile. Seeing him fall, the Persian force began to collapse and retreat back toward their camp.

The death of Mardonius and the defeat of the Persians at the hand of the allied Greeks, Xerxes' dream of conquest was over.

Greek (Blue) Setup

Hoplite Steps: +1 rank per unit at start, adjustable of +2 max per unit

Leaders: Arimnestos (2-4-3/White), Pausanias (1-6-3/Red)

Impulses: 4

Rout Level: 9 units

Persian (Red) Setup

Hoplite Steps: +1 rank per unit at start, adjustable of +2 max per unit

Leaders: Artabazus (2-4-3/W), Mardonius (1-6-3/W)

Impulses: 3

Rout Level: 10 units

Special Rules

1. The Greeks begin holding the initiative.
2. The Greek camp may be set up in either D13 or S16.

   Treat the river/stream at the top of the map as River terrain.

14.4 Mycale

Fought nearly simultaneously with Plataea, the battle of Mycale was a smaller engagement that helped put the final nail in the Persian navy's coffin. Knowing that they no longer had the strength to engage the Greeks at sea, the Persian naval commander Tigranes landed his ships at the Mycale promontory and promptly built a stockade to protect them from land-based attacks. It soon becoming clear to the Greek naval commander Leotychidas that the Persians were unwilling to face the Greeks at sea: he ordered the fleet to land a few miles north of the Persian camp and prepare for an infantry engagement.

Leotychidas divided his hoplite marines into two wings. The left wing, close to the sea shore was composed primarily of Athenians and their allies. This wing would march directly at the Persians to hold them in place, while the right wing (comprised of mostly Spartans), would march further inland through obscuring terrain to attack the Persian left flank by surprise. All told, the Greek allies managed to field about 5,000 men, half of them hoplites. The Persian force out numbered the Greeks by roughly fifty percent, but these were the usual, less well armed and armored soldiers, against the proven greek hoplites.

The Greek hammer-and-anvil plan to hold and crush the Persians did not go off as planned. Although the two Greek wings advanced at the same time, the Spartans were seriously delayed by the rough terrain, leaving the Greeks to hold against a larger force for a longer period of time. The Persians, knowing the power of the attacking Greeks, formed themselves into a shield-wall in advance of their stockade. This blunted and held the Greeks at bay for some time. But, eventually the wall began to give way and collapse, allowing the Greeks to pick apart the defending Persian formation. Just in time to share in the glory, the Spartans appeared and the entire Persian formation collapsed.

Some of the Persians tried to retreat along the coast, but were picked off piecemeal by local Milesian forces. The rest of the Persians retreated into their stockade, attempting to escape by sea. The stockade did not hold long and the sol-

diers within were crushed. Tigranes was killed in the fighting, as were several other Persian commanders. The Greeks sacked the Persian camp and burned those ships that were unable to launch in time.

Following the losses at Mycale and Plataea, Persian effectiveness was essentially nil. The Greek navy moved north to the Hellespont and burned the Persian bridges across the Bosphorus. The Greeks then supported a second Ionian revolt, which effectively freed the greek peninsula from Persian control.

Greek (Blue) Setup

Hoplite Steps: +1 rank per unit at start, adjustable of +2 max per unit

Leaders: Xanthyppus (2-6-3/White)

Impulses: 3

Rout Level: 8 units

Persian (Red) Setup

Leaders: Mardontes (2-4-2/White), Tigranes (1-4-3/White)

Impulses: 3

Rout Level: 7 units

Special Rules

1. The Greeks begin holding the initiative.

2. The Persians may start with or create Shield Walls.

3. After determining initiative at the beginning of each turn, the Greek player rolls a die. If the roll is less than or equal to the current turn number, roll another die. If the roll is a 1-3, the Spartan reinforcements arrive through squares D1 through G1. If the roll is a 4-5, the Spartan reinforcements arrive through squares A4-A7. If the roll is a 6, these reinforcements arrive through squares A10-A13. Once the area through which the reinforcements arrive has been determined, the Greek player may delay entry by one or more turns to modify the die roll by plus or minus one per turn to change the entry location. For example, if a 4 was rolled, one turn delay could shift the entry die roll to a 3 or a two turn delay could shift the entry die roll to a six. The reinforcements arrive disrupted. The reinforcement units include four Hoplites (+1 rank per unit) and one leader (Leotychidas, 1-6-3/R).

4. If the Persians lose their camp, the Greeks immediately win the battle. If the Persians have suffered more losses than the Greeks, it is a major victory. Otherwise, it's a minor victory.

15.0 Credits

Game Design: Mike Nagel

Graphics: Mike Nagel

Proofing: Audrey M. Nagel, Jean-François Lefier, Nuno Martins

Publication: *First Edition*: War Diary Publications
Second Edition: Blue Panther

16.0 Select Bibliography

The following is a list of some of the key sources used when researching and designing ***Blade & Bow***:

- Burn, A.R.; ***The Persian Wars***; The Folio Society, 2002
- Eggenberger, David; ***An Encyclopedia of Battles***; Dover Publications; 1985
- Fagan, Garrett G.; ***Great Battles of the Ancient World***; The Teaching Company; 2005
- Montagu, John Drogo; ***Battles of the Greek & Roman Worlds***; Greenhill Books; 2000
- Sabin, Philip; ***Lost Battles***; Hambledon Continuum; 2007
- Sidebottom, Harry; ***Ancient Warfare: A Very Short Introduction***; Oxford University Press; 2004
- Sidebottom, Harry and Michael Whitby (ed.); ***The Encyclopedia of Ancient Battles***; Wiley Blackwell; 2017
- Sides, Peter; ***Ancient Historical Battles***; Gosling Press; 1992
- Strassler, Robert B. (ed.); ***The Landmark Herodotus***; Anchor Books; 2009
- Wikipedia

17.0 Designer's Notes

*Some folks may wonder why I created **Blade & Bow** when I'd also designed **Dawn of Battle** (which covers much of the same territory). In fact, players of both games will notice some clear similarities between the two designs. However, the latter game covers a much broader period of time and is therefore required to be a little more abstract. In **Dawn of Battle**, a "medium infantry" is generally understood to represent an Ancient Greek hoplite and a "heavy infantry" unit a Roman maniple or cohort. But within that design, they can just as easily represent Viking war bands or dismounted knights. As I used to say in my pre-retirement, application design days: this is not a bug, it's a feature. Scenarios play out as they did historically and provide an enjoyable challenge to players. But … I do feel that **Dawn of Battle** abstracts out some of the lessons that players could learn about the evolution of infantry combat during the classical period. **Blade & Bow** was designed to focus on those lessons in a relatively easy and elegant way.*

*I originally conceived of the **Blade & Bow** not long after I completed the design for my ancient naval game **Návarchoi**. **Blade & Bow** was originally intended to be something of a riff off of the naval game, in that it would use a "card-driven" mechanic to activate formations. It was also intended to use generic map tiles that, when assembled, would mimic the historical terrain for each battle. Although this activation mechanic works great in the naval game, it just did not cut the mustard for infantry command and control. Given that I had somewhat recently devised **Dawn of Battle**, did I really want to create another game that uses generic terrain? I had lost patience with terrain tiles. Even though the scope of the subject matter is still rather broad, I thought it best to provide fixed maps and try to present the evolution over the course of several quad games (like the good old SPI days). Each quad would include four battles from a more restricted time period and players can contrast how the battles unfold in each game. The "Persian Incursion" into Greece seemed as good a place as any to introduce the system, particularly as the battle of Marathon is an excellent example of how the Greek hoplite formation came to prominence. Future volumes are expected to cover the Spartan Hegemony, the rise of Macedonia, and the introduction of the Roman legionary system. A tall order? Perhaps, but I believe the system is up to the challenge.*

*So what makes **Blade & Bow** different from other games on ancient combat and how do these features work together to achieve the system's design goals?*

Movement

*The one feature of **Návarchoi** that I've retained in this design is the use of a grid of squares to regulate movement, rather than the traditional hexagons. Hexes are obviously the most elegant tool for this purpose, or they wouldn't have become so prevalent over the past sixty years or so. However, when using hexes to simulate linear combat (of any kind, not just ancient combat), they have a couple of nasty side-effects. First, if units face a hex-side, they cannot form a straight line. This looks odd and sort of allows every other unit in a line to expose its flanks (not something that the generals at the time would have appreciated). Clearly, rules can be written to address this issue, but … rules have to be written. Alternatively, units can face a hex vertex, to create those straight ranks. But, this does not allow units to move directly forward and instead they must "waddle" forward from hex to hex.*

The use of a square grid resolves these issues, allowing an army to line up and move forward naturally. But, a square grid also comes with a few challenges of its own. Mainly, a square grid allows units to move in eight directions rather than just six. Allowing units to move both orthogonally and diagonally becomes more of a challenge regarding how movement points (or whatever mechanic is used to limit distance travelled) are used more difficult. You cannot simply stipulate that a unit has five movement points and allow it to move in any direction. Doing so makes moving diagonally much more efficient than the alternative as more distance is actually travelled in those directions. Thanks, Pythagoras! To address this issue, I employ what I've come to call a "3-2-1" system. When addressing any issue of distance on a square grid (movement, range calculation, etc.), it costs three points to cross diagonally into an adjacent square, two points to cross orthogonally into an adjacent square, and one point to change direction from one vector to the next. This system results in movement point values being much higher than players would ordinarily see, often by a factor of three. So a unit that ordinarily could spend four or five movement points to cross hexes would have twelve or fifteen points to spend using a square grid. Is it substantially more complex to ask players to count by twos and/or threes when moving units? I don't think so, but your mileage may vary. The alternative is to only allow for orthogonal movement, but that results in a requirement for constant ninety-degree turns. I believe it's a reasonable trade-off for more realistic movement.

Another effect of using a square grid for movement is in how opposing units come into contact, particularly while in a line. When a line of troops attacks an enemy orthogonally, this is very straight forward. When two lines collide while each is facing diagonally, the situation becomes less intuitive as it appears that every other unit in the line is in front or or behind the friendly units to which they are adjacent. This situation is something of a redux of the "facing a hex side" issue, but possibly even more exacerbated by the fact that if there is not a unit "behind" two adjacent units, it seems pretty easy for an enemy unit to slip diagonally between them. This design issue was a real head-scratcher for some time. Then I realized that I could resolve this issue using zones of control in a manner similar to Mark Simonitch's "ZOC-bonds" (see any of his ***'4x*** *titles from GMT Games). It's pretty straight-forward to force a unit to halt movement when moving right in front of an enemy. In* ***Blade & Bow****, this is considered a "strong" zone of control. The squares that are adjacent to a unit's directly frontal square, are considered "weak" zones of control and only temporarily halt movement. If, however, these "weak" squares overlap between two friendly units, they become "strong." This overlapping cancels an enemy unit's ability to infiltrate between two units. This may sound a little confusing, but trust me … it works well.*

Combat

So what was combat in the ancient world like? In a nutshell, it was a wrestling match on a grand scale. Hundreds of armed, and to varying degrees armored, men would slam into each other in an effort to shove and trample their opponents in an effort to break the enemy's line. If a gap could be created, the centers of the enemy's line would become exposed and vulnerable to flank attacks. Without vital support to the right or left, survival instincts would kick in and cohesion would start to collapse all along the line. Segments of a collapsing line that became encircled would be captured or destroyed, while the remainder routed to safety. The victor would be left holding the field and stories spread by the victors and vanquished alike would instill fear or fuel vengeance in the armies assembling for the next fight. How to model this?

In many ancient combat games, a die is rolled, modifiers applied, and the result on a combat chart indicate what happens. Typically, this is either bad for the attacker or bad for the defender in a sort of zero-sum manner. I don't believe that this is the best way to model ancient combat and tried to address this in the melee system found in ***Dawn of Battle*** *where to opposing units are quite apt to meet the same fate when they are more evenly matched. That system provides accurate results, but it still falls somewhat short in describing the chaos that was actually going on when two lines clashed.*

One feature that I really wanted to stress was the fear of engagement. The concept of how soldiers of any era overcome their fear of mortality to engage the enemy in close combat is common among game designs. At its foundation is the effectiveness of leadership upon the led. ***Blade & Bow*** *is no different in this respect, as a unit's basic morale is equal to the command rating of the army's commander. But I wanted to go one step further by also noting the effect upon morale by the type of unit engaged.*

It's one thing to face off against a bunch of guys with wicker shields and pointed sticks. It's something entirely different to oppose a close-ranked mass of guys in covered in bronze while armed with sharp swords or spears. This fear would be exacerbated by an even bigger mass of guys armed with fifteen-foot sarissa. To simulate the psychological effect of a defensive formation upon the attacker, I offer more opportunities to fail a morale check when attempting to engage. This effect is further refined by the direction in which a unit is attacking as one of the flaws of these closely ranked formations was one-sided strength. There was a less of a threat in attacking a hoplite or phalanx from its shield side than from the side holding the blade.

Once units engaged in melee, it was fury until units are either forced to fall back (recoil), fall apart (rout), or commanders stop egging them on (command and control).

A quick note about ranged combat (aka the "Bow" in the title). This mechanism has been pretty much lifted completely from ***Dawn of Battle****. Units roll to hit and defenders roll to cancel those hits based upon their imperviousness to missile attacks. What's different, of course, is how ranges are calculated due to the use of a square grid, as well as how damage is applied. And speaking of damage …*

Damage

As noted previously, hoplite formations were made up of ranks of soldiers. During melee, front ranks may be wounded or killed, but immediately replaced by rear ranks, allowing their forward momentum to continue unabated. The Macedonians took this to the extreme, while the Romans ultimately perfected the system. To model how this type of unit takes damage, I opted for both a step-loss system as well as note how each different type of massed unit distributes hits. Units noted as "light" or "medium" do not use step-losses. In these cases, the first hit on a unit disrupts it and a second hit forces it to recoil. Any subsequent hits are treated as morale checks, the failure of which force the unit to "rout" temporarily (or perhaps, permanently). "Heavy" units are provided with an additional marker hidden below them that indicates the number of additional steps (or ranks) the unit contains. These markers run from +0 to +6 and are placed beneath each unit. An opponent does not know how many ranks a unit contains until engaging it in combat. Rather than recoil following disruption, a heavy unit takes step losses until only one rank (the unit itself) remains. Roman maniples and cohorts have the additional benefit of being "flexible" and may ignore a number of hits equal to the ranks that it includes before taking any hits.

This system of hidden steps allows for a more accurate understanding of how hoplites were deployed during combat. A perfect example of this is the battle of Marathon, which is included in the game. During that battle, the Greek general Miltiades stripped ranks of hoplites from the center of his line to extend and reinforce his flanks. Whether or not this deployment was done on purpose to allow the double-envelopment of the Persians is a matter of speculation. What's important here, is that the Persians could not know where the strength of the Greek line was, as they attacked pretty much evenly across the line, managed to push back the center, but were ultimately destroyed on the stronger wings. The game system makes this sort of tactic allowable by letting players determine where they want to deploy the weight of their hoplites. The scenarios indicate how troops were deployed historically and also indicate a maximum number of ancillary ranks a heavy unit can contain. Epaminondas took this to the extreme at the battle of Leuctra, roughly forty years later (and which will be included in the next volume of ***Blade & Bow****).*

Also of note is how damage is actually caused. Since ancient combat is not really the zero-sum affair that many games seem to make it, the system needs to be able to create damage in a more realistic manner. I felt that the the damage that a unit takes in combat is akin to a sliding scale based upon a unit's ferocity. If it really wants to damage the enemy, a unit may take more damage. If it prefers to stand and survive,

it will dish out less damage to the enemy. I found this to be beautifully emulated by die rolls where the extremes dictate damage or survival. Die rolls of ones and twos indicated hits, while rolls of fives and sixes indicate cancellations. Each side rolls damage dice and cancellations eliminate hits caused by the enemy. Re-rolls are possible based upon leadership and the stance of a unit (attacking or defending). Certain events can also force a unit to push harder or stand firmer through the application of simple die roll modifiers. This mechanism, combined with command effects makes a nice sense of controlled chaos on the battlefield. Things generally go the way of the stronger unit, but the gods may decide the fate of a unit in unexpected ways.

Command and Control

Obviously movement and combat make up the bulk of the game system, but how does the game allow for a player to control his or her army's fate through initiating movement and combat? This is where leadership comes into play. As I noted earlier, I originally intended the design to use a card-driven system similar to my Návarchoi game. In that system, cards are played to activate small groups of ships for movement and combat. When I tried the same in ***Blade & Bow****, the results were less than satisfactory in trying to emulate the historical outcomes of ancient battles. There were features of those battles that I just could not duplicate. I still wanted to use some kind of impulse system where players alternated activating formations, but something was missing. The problem can best be exemplified through the battle of Marathon (again). That battle opened with a charge by the Greek hoplites that the Persians did little to oppose. Were the Persians surprised? Were they simply staring slack-jawed as the wave of bronze approached? In any case, it's unlikely that a Persian player would just "pass" until the Greeks were on them. So I hit upon not using just impulses where formations could be activated, but also activations within each impulse. The number of activations available would be randomly determined dependent upon the overall commander's ability. Unlike other impulse-based games (including* ***Dawn of Battle****), units are never "done," per se. They can be continually activated so long as they have the impulses and activations to do so. I believe that this allows the ancient armies represented to behave in a more historical fashion. When a formation is selected during an impulse, a formation could possibly fire missiles, move, and then melee in the same impulse, providing that three activations were available. Alternatively, a unit could move twice and then melee, which is what the Greeks did at Marathon. These activations also allow for a unit to melee multiple times, assuming that it has passed its initial melee commitment morale check. Once this check has been passed, a unit may continue to melee (even across impulses), provided that the unit is continually activated to do so. Once attention has been placed elsewhere, the unit has to pass another commitment check. A commander cannot stop commanding.*

It may be worth noting that I originally intended to use special colored dice that would generate more or less activations based upon the command value of a leader. This worked okay, but I realized that since I was no longer using cards to generate impulses, I needed something else for them to do other than events, and they provided an excellent alternative to dice (and provide a cost savings as well … there were already enough dice in the game).

One last thing to mention with regards to command and control is the rout/recovery process for units that have fled the front lines. Rather than gum up the map with routing units, I've opted instead to remove them from the map completely and place them in a special holding box from which they can "recover" with a rally roll and be placed back near the action or be eliminated from the game entirely, pushing its army toward the breaking point. Leaders positioned in an army's camp can be used to modify rally rolls for routed units. This mechanic was adapted from a similar one used in GMT Games' ***Battle of Borodin****o (one of the* ***Triumph and Glory*** *series of games). I find it makes the game much cleaner to play and removed a lot of excess rules overhead otherwise dedicated to rout movement and the effects of routing units on other movement and combat.*

And Another Thing

That pretty much covers the thought process behind the design of ***Blade & Bow*** *and how I believe it does a better job at simulating ancient combat than many other games out there on the same subject (even, to an extent, my own* ***Dawn of Battle****). For those who have not purchased a copy of the game yet (what are you waiting for?), you may be interested in knowing something about the card deck.*

I cannot really say that ***Blade & Bow*** *is a card-driven game, despite having that in mind when it was originally conceived. It's more of a "card-enhanced" game as the cards mostly provide an alternative to the use of special dice used to determine activations. That is not to take away two other key features of the action deck. First, it provides special events that players can employ during play to enhance both their chances to win as well as the narrative of play. The cards allow such events such as enhancing movement, bonuses to combat, unexpected rally attempts, and the like. Each of the sixty cards are unique with the sole exception of a "Tough Luck" card that does nothing other than take up space in a player's hand (there are a couple of these). To temper the use of these events, there are also "morale commitment" bonuses on each card that can be used in lieu of the event to enhance morale check die rolls when trying to get units into combat. These points can be critical when trying to break through the enemy line, but using them discards events unused. A nice little added layer of decision making to make the game that much more interesting.*

A final word about this second edition of the game. The first edition was published by ***War Diary Publications****, and I want to thank Roy Mathieson for his support in getting* ***Blade & Bow*** *into print. Unfortunately it did not do too well initially, but I'm confident enough in the game system to present this second edition. The components are mostly unchanged, apart from these updated rules and a couple of tweaks here and there to help with printing. If you enjoy the game, please get the word out. The more it gets played, the more likely the next volume gets published.*

Thanks!

Mike Nagel