



# Civitates Bellantes

Ancient Wargames  
in the Classical Era

Pydna

22 June 168 BC

## Background

Pydna is the classic clash between the Roman Legion and Greek Phalanx. The Romans invaded Macedon with a Consular army (2 Roman and 2 Italian Legions) under Lucius Aemilius Paullus. They were supported by Pergamene and Numidian Allies, including Elephants. They were also joined by a number of Greek troops from friendly states.

*“Several separate engagements were going on all over the field, which first shook the phalanx out of its formation and then broke it up. As long as it was compact, its front bristling with levelled spears, its strength was irresistible. If by attacking them at various points you compel them to bring round their spears, which owing to their length and weight are cumbersome and unwieldy, they become a confused and involved mass, but if any sudden and tumultuous attack is made on their flank or rear, they go to pieces like a falling house. In this way they were forced to meet the repeated charges of small bodies of Roman troops with their front dislocated in many places, and wherever there were gaps the Romans worked their way amongst their ranks.” Livy*

The Macedonian King Perseus (with Thracian mercenaries and allies) offered battle near Pydna. At first the Romans refused battle but a skirmish broke out by a stream between Perseus' Thracian allies and some Italian cohorts. The skirmish escalated into a full scale battle as both sides reinforced the skirmish. The Macedonian phalanx was initially successful but as they followed up over rough ground they lost coherence and the Romans pushed into the gaps and broke them. The elite Macedonian Peltasts (who were pikemen) fought to the death.

The Roman victory ended the Kingdom of Macedon and resulted in Roman hegemony over Greece.

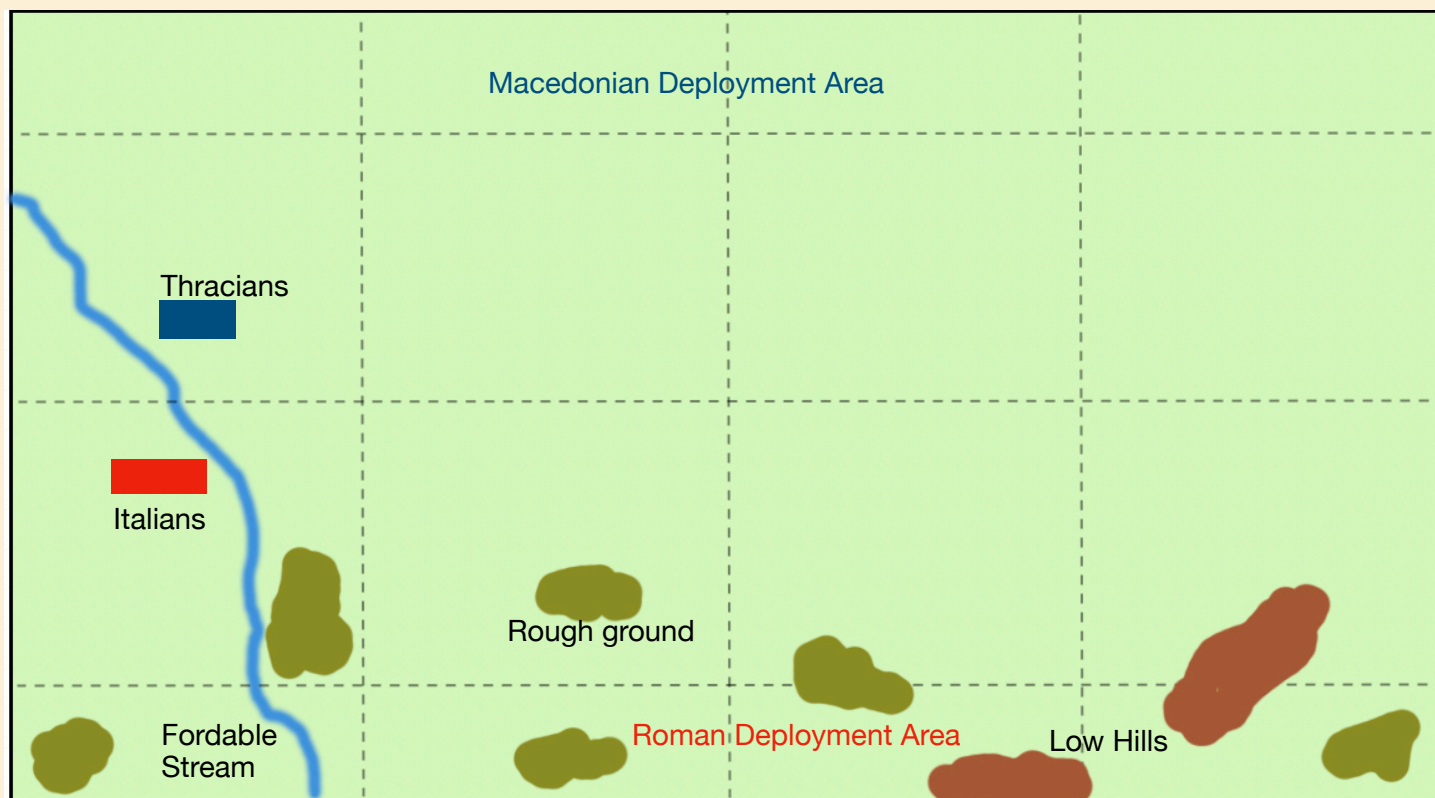
## Game Scenario

As the flat open ground favoured the Macedonian phalanx the Romans refused battle and encamped in the foothills on the edge of the plain. The next morning, a skirmish broke out between some of Perseus' Thracian and Paullus' Italian auxiliaries. Both were drawing water from a stream which separated the two encampments. when a horse broke loose from the Roman side and was chased across the stream by the Italians. Perseus decided to reinforce the Thracians, deploying his whole army. Seeing this, Paullus formed up the Roman army in response.



This is the situation at the start of our game. The Italians and Thracians are skirmishing with each other on the Macedonian side of the stream (see map next page). The Macedonians have begun their advance with more troops moving up ahead to reinforce the skirmish. The Romans are in the process of deploying at the edge of the hills in the rough ground. In the historical battle when the Romans were initially pushed back into the rough ground the Macedonian phalanx fell into disorder and was defeated.

# The Battlefield



Grid lines are 2 foot intervals for an 8x5 table for 25/28mm figures. 3000 Thracians and 3000 Italians are pre-deployed skirmishing with each other on either side of the stream as marked on the map (see also orders of battle below). All other troops on both sides may be deployed anywhere up to on foot in from their table edge.

## Roman Order of Battle

*The troop descriptions are for Civitates Bellantes Rules. The actual number of troops they represent are also given for easy translation to other rule sets.*

**Consul Aemilius Paullus**, directly commanding the reserve

600 Roman heavy cavalry, A Grade, high morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

**Attalos Philadelphus of Pergamon**, commanding the left wing allies:

600 Italian heavy cavalry, B Grade, average morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

600 Pergamene heavy cavalry, A Grade, high morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

1500 Pergamene javelinmen, A Grade, average morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

1500 Greek javelinmen, B Grade, average morale (2 units of 2 stands each)

1500 Cyrti slingers, B Grade, average morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

1500 Achaian archers, B Grade, average morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

3000 Italian javelinmen, B Grade, average morale (2 units of 2 stands each) *On table skirmishing with the Thracians across the stream.*

**Scipio Nasica**, commanding the one Roman and one Italian legion of the left.

3000 Velites, skirmishers, B Grade, average morale (2 units of 2 stands each)

3200 Hastati, legionaries, B Grade, high morale (2 units of 2 stands each)

3200 Principes, legionaries, A Grade, high morale (2 units of 2 stands each)

1600 Triarii, understrength legionaries, A Grade, high morale (2 units of 2 stands each)

**Lucius Albinus**, commanding the one Roman and one Italian legion of the right.

3000 Velites, skirmishers, B Grade, average morale 2 units of 2 stands each)

3200 Hastati, legionaries, B Grade, high morale (2 units of 2 stands each)

3200 Principes, legionaries, A Grade, high morale (2 units of 2 stands each)

1600 Triarii, understrength legionaries, A Grade, high morale (2 units of 2 stands each)

1500 Italian javelinmen, B Grade, average morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

**Misagenes the Numidian**, commanding the allies on the right wing.

600 Italian heavy cavalry, B Grade, average morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

1500 Numidian light cavalry, B Grade, high morale (1 unit of 5 stands)

1500 Numidian skirmishers, B Grade, average morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

32 African Elephants (2 units of 1 stand each)



## Roman Briefing

The 3000 Italian javelinmen skirmishing with the Thracians are drawn from Attalos' contingent. They will start the game 'out of command.'

Your elephants have the potential to cause mayhem as the enemy cavalry will have a hard time facing them and they can badly disrupt the phalanx. However they are vulnerable to light troops and missile fire and if hurt or frightened could end up rampaging through your own troops.

The enemy phalanx is very powerful if faced head on and in good order. However it is vulnerable to disorder, particularly from terrain and manoeuvre as well as flank attacks. Shooting is not that effective against it as the long pikes break up the impact of incoming missiles. You can expect to lose an initial frontal combat against a reasonably well ordered phalanx so you will need to replace your legionary front lines with fresh troops.

Having now risked a decisive battle, Paullus' objective is to simply crush the enemy and force an end to the war. A marginal victory is unlikely to see him getting re-elected as consul. He also needs a resounding success to wipe the stain from his family's honour resulting from his father's defeat at Cannae.

All commanders and troops, including the allies can be completely relied on for loyal support.



*The Roman legionaries and Macedonian phalangites close on each other.  
The Roman velites have withdrawn behind the heavily armed legionaries after initial skirmishing.*



## Macedonian Order of Battle

**King Perseus**, directly commanding the reserve.

600 Royal Ile, heavy cavalry, A grade, high morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

**King Kotys**, commanding the Thracian allies and mercenaries on the right wing.

1500 Thracian skirmishers, B grade, high morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

1200 Thracian heavy cavalry B grade, exceptional morale (1 unit of 4 stands)

1500 Illyrian javelinmen, B grade, average morale (1 unit of 1 stands)

1500 Cretan archers, B grade, average morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

4500 Mercenary thureophoroi (javelinmen), B grade, average morale (2 units of 3 stands each)

3000 Thracian javelinmen, B grade, average morale (2 units of 2 stands each). *On table skirmishing with the Italians across the stream.*

**Milo**, commanding the phalanx on the right.

3200 elite peltastoi (pike), A grade, exceptional morale (1 unit of 4 stands)

6400 bronze shields (pike), A grade, average morale (1 unit of 8 stands)

**Euphanor**, commanding the phalanx on the left

4800 white shields (pike), B Grade, average morale (1 unit of 6 stands)

6400 bronze shield phalangites (pike), A Grade, average morale (1 unit of 8 stands)

**Philippos**, commanding the cavalry and auxiliaries on the left wing

900 Tarrantine light cavalry, B grade, average morale (1 unit of 3 stands)

1200 Macedonian heavy cavalry, A grade, average morale (2 units of 2 stands each)

600 Greek heavy cavalry, B grade, Javelinmen, average morale (1 unit of 2 stands)

4500 Mercenary thureophoroi (javelinmen), B grade, average morale (3 units of 2 stands each)

1500 Cretan archers, B grade, average morale (1 unit of 2 stands)



*The Macedonian Bronze Shields.*



## Macedonian Briefing

The Thracian javelinmen are skirmishing with the Italians forward of the main position. They will start the game 'out of command.'

The Macedonian cavalry have been given slightly lower morale than might normally be expected for primarily aristocratic horsemen. This reflects their lack of enthusiasm in the historical battle, probably because most of the Macedonian aristocrats were sympathetic to Rome.

Everything will depend on the success of your phalanx. It is very powerful if facing enemy head on and in good order. However it is vulnerable to disorder, particularly from terrain and manoeuvre as well as from flank attacks. You will need to protect the flanks of the phalanx at all costs, even if this means sacrificing some of your lighter troops. If the Romans can turn your flanks the phalanx will be doomed. Although you can reasonably count on winning an initial combat with your phalanx against the legions, the latter's greater flexibility combined with the ability to relieve the lines mean that over the long run they can be very hard to beat.

The enemy has elephants and these are likely to cause you a lot of heart ache. Your cavalry will have a very hard time facing them and they can badly disrupt the phalanx if they are able to get close to it. However elephants are vulnerable to light troops and missile fire. If hurt or frightened they could end up rampaging back through the enemy's troops.

You start the game with your cavalry to the rear of the phalanx so that you can deploy them where and when you wish. You may either keep them massed as a single command or you could split them up, taking some under Perseus' direct command and leaving the rest with Philippos. This should be decided before the game starts.

Perseus did not want this war in the first place. By 168 it had been going on for 3 years without any decisive engagement. Although the peasantry is firmly behind him, support amongst the aristocrats and other Greek states is very shaky. Therefore Perseus needs an overwhelming victory in which the Roman army is utterly destroyed. Anything less is unlikely to end the war and the longer it drags on the more it favours the Romans.

