



Civitates Bellantes

Ancient Wargames in the
Classical Era

Heraclea

280 BC

Historical Background

The Greeks of Taras in southern Italy appealed to Pyrrhus, King of Epirus for help against the Romans. By 280 BC Pyrrhus was the most powerful ruler in the Greek world, having taken control of Macedon just a few years before.

On learning of Pyrrhus's arrival in Italy the Romans sent an army of 4 legions under the consul Valerius Laevinus to stop him.

The armies met at the River Siris near Heraclea. Pyrrhus had 3,000 cavalry, 2000 archers, 500 slingers, 20,000 Epirote and Macedonian pikemen 20 elephants and a number of hastily trained Tarrantine allies. The Romans with 4 legions and allies were fairly well matched in infantry numbers with a few more cavalry. It was the first time the Romans had faced either pikemen or elephants.

The Romans attacked across the river which was held by a small number of Greek light infantry. They withdrew, slowing the Roman advance while Pyrrhus deployed. The infantry lines seesawed back and forth with neither side able to make any headway until Pyrrhus unleashed his elephants which he had been holding in reserve. They succeeded in routing the Roman cavalry and spreading terror amongst the legionaries. A charge by Pyrrhus' cavalry secured victory for the Greeks.



Game Scenario

This scenario is designed for Civitates Bellantes rules but can be used with any rule set. It is a deployment game as well as a formal battle. Both sides initially begin with their forces only partially deployed. They must first fight for position and then defeat the enemy in battle. For this reason players will need more depth on the playing table than for a game where both sides begin fully deployed.

I have played this game with 6mm figures (using Legio VI rules) lengthwise on a 4 x 6 foot table. For larger scale figures greater width will be needed - 6 feet for 15mm figures and 8 feet wide for 28mm figures. In larger scales.



Heraclea being fought with 6mm figures using Legio VI Macedonica rules

Orders of Battle

Scale. The orders of battle are for Civitates Bellantes with 28mm figures: 1 Heavy Infantry or Javelinmen stand = 800-1000 men. 1 Cavalry or other light infantry stand = 4-500 men.

Alternative scale for smaller figures: 1 Heavy Infantry or javelinmen stand = 4-500 men. Cavalry or other light infantry stand = 2-250 men. Adjust troop numbers accordingly.

Greeks

General - Pyrrhus (exceptional commander)

3 Subordinate Commanders

2 stands Macedonian Phalangites, A Grade, High Morale, in 1 unit

14 stands Epirote Phalangites, A Grade, Average Morale, in 2 or 3 units

6 stands Tarrantine Phalangites, B Grade, Poor Morale, in 1 unit

6 stands Mercenary Javelinmen, A Grade, Average Morale, in 2 or 3 units

5 stands Missile Troops, B Grade, Average Morale in 1 or 2 units

2 stands Agema, Shock Cavalry, A Grade, Exceptional Morale, 1 unit

2 stands Thessalians, Heavy Cavalry, A Grade, High Morale, in 1 unit

3 stands Tarrantines, Light Cavalry, B Grade, Average Morale, in 1 unit

2 Elephants, A4/D3

Representing 28,000 heavy infantry, 2500 light infantry, 3000 cavalry and 20 elephants

Romans

General - Publius Valerius Laevinus

3 Subordinate Commanders

2 Roman Legions each with:

2 stands Hastati, Legionaries, B Grade, High Morale

2 stands Principes, Legionaries, B Grade, High Morale

2 understrength Triarii, Legionaries, Armoured, B Grade, Exceptional Morale

2 Italian Legions each with:

2 stands Hastati, Legionaries, B Grade, Average Morale

2 stands Principes, Legionaries, B Grade, Average Morale

2 understrength Triarii, Legionaries, Armoured, B Grade, High Morale

4 Italian Cohorts, Javelinmen, B Grade, Average Morale, in 2 units

2 Italian Cohorts, Light Spears, B grade, Average Morale, 1 unit

4 Roman Skirmishers, B Grade, Average Morale, in 2 units

4 Italian Skirmishers B Grade, Average Morale, in 2 units

2 Roman Cavalry, Heavy Cavalry, B Grade, High Morale in 1 unit

6 Italian Cavalry, Heavy Cavalry, B Grade, Average Morale in 3 units

Representing 24,000 heavy infantry, 4000 light infantry and 4000 cavalry



The Battlefield

The river Siris is fordable all along its length but counts as a major obstacle. There are however two fords which can be crossed without penalty. These can accommodate units up to two stands wide. The only other feature is Pyrrhus' camp which is fortified. There is no other terrain of any significance on the table, though scattered copses, farms etc may be added for visual effect and removed or re-positioned when they get in the way. If using the smaller scale then players could add a second ford.

The map opposite is scaled for 6mm figures on a 6x4' table. Increase width for larger figures. Depth can be the same, or even reduced, if Pyrrhus's camp is off table.



Deployment

The Roman player may deploy one commander and as much of his cavalry and light infantry as he wishes on table in his deployment area behind the River Siris. Remaining troops will be off table and may enter from the first turn in one or two columns with units one behind the other.

The Greek player may deploy one commander and as much of his light infantry as he wishes anywhere on the table to the right of the river. His remaining troops start the game in the camp (which may be off table)

The Romans move first on the first turn. The Greek commander on table may send a messenger back to Pyrrhus to warn him once the Romans start moving. Once the messenger reaches the camp the Greeks may start to deploy their remaining troops, leaving the camp in column of commands.



Two Roman Legions deployed in their traditional four lines: Velites skirmishing in front with the Hastati, Principes and Triarii behind. The Triarii had less men covering the same frontage as such count as 'understrength' in Civitates Bellantes rules. The small number of Roman cavalry would normally be brigaded together on one flank, the more numerous Italian allied cavalry on the other.