



COMITATUS

Warfare in the Dark Ages

3rd - 11th C AD

Game Scenario

Milvian Bridge

AD 312

Historical Background

Maxentius and Constantine had been shadow boxing in the opening years of the 4th century as they vied for power in the West. After the death of the Emperor Galerius in 311, their struggle broke out into open conflict. Maxentius (who controlled Italy and Africa) prepared for war, but Constantine (whose power base was Britain and Gaul) moved first.

“Having raised an army amongst the barbarians, Germans, and Celts, whom he had conquered, and likewise drawn a force out of Britain, amounting in the whole to 90,000 foot and 8,000 horse, Constantine marched from the Alps into Italy” Zosimus

Constantine had to leave many of his troops behind to guard the Rhine frontier. His army probably numbered around 20,000 men and included units of newly raised elite auxiliaries (Auxilia Palatina). After crossing the Alps, Constantine defeated a Maxentian army near Turin, then moved to defeat yet another army at Verona. The Maxentian army at Turin included a substantial number of fully armoured cataphracts and Constantine dealt with them by skirmishing, indicating that he had none in his army.

When Constantine marched on Rome, Maxentius, marched out to meet him. Maxentius was apparently reluctant to offer battle but he was losing support and needed to act. He built a pontoon bridge over the Tiber and formed up with his back to the river. Constantine famously had a vision in which Christ came to him and promised him victory if he carried his sign into battle (*in hoc signo vinces*).



Maxentius' Praetorians in scale armour are depicted on the Arch of Constantine fleeing across the pontoon bridge and falling into the water as they are pursued by Constantine's cavalry.

“Constantine sent his cavalry against that of the enemy, whom they charged with such impetuosity that they threw them into disorder. The signal being given to the infantry, they likewise marched in good order towards the enemy...As long as the cavalry kept their ground, Maxentius retained some hopes, but when they gave way, he fled with the rest over the bridge into the city. The beams not being strong enough to bear so great a weight, they broke; and Maxentius, with the others, was carried with the stream down the river.” Zosimus

Scale

1 Infantry stand = 500-600 men

1 Cavalry stand = 250-300 men

Army Organisation

Each army is divided into 3 contingents, one of which is commanded in person by the Commander in Chief.

Players may choose their troops from the options below and organise them into any number of units.

Maxentian Order of Battle

Commander in Chief - Maxentius, dice for LPs, re-roll 5 once only

2 Subordinates - dice for LPs

Choose 12 cavalry stands (representing 3,000 men) from the following options:

Leaders' Comitaus units: 3-4 stands equites, A Grade, High Morale

Horse Archers: up to 2 stands light horse archers, B Grade, Average Morale

Heavy Cavalry: 2-6 stands equites, A Grade, Average Morale

Moors: 2-4 stands light javelin cavalry, B Grade, Average Morale

Clibanarii: up to 4 stands cataphracts, A Grade, Average Morale

Choose 26 infantry stands (representing 13,000 men) from the following options:

Praetorians: 2-8 stands Roman infantry, A Grade, High Morale.

Option for one Praetorian stand to be a Leader's Comitatus instead of heavy cavalry.

Legionaries: 4-8 stands Roman infantry, A Grade, Average Morale.

Auxiliaries: 4-8 stands Roman infantry, B Grade, Average Morale. *Option to class auxiliaries as LI javelinmen instead.*

Auxiliary Archers: 2-8 stands foot archers, B Grade, Average Morale.

Note

Constantine's men have higher morale as a result of their recent victories.



Horse Archers are depicted in a frieze on the Arch of Constantine commemorating the battle.

Constantinian Order of Battle

Commander in Chief - Constantine, dice for LPs, re-roll 2 once only

2 Subordinates - dice for LPs

Choose 15 cavalry stands (representing 4,000 men) from the following options:

Leaders' Comitaus units: 3-4 stands equites, A Grade, Exceptional Morale

Horse Archers: 2-4 stands light horse archers, B Grade, Average Morale

Heavy Cavalry: 4-8 stands equites, A Grade, High Morale

Light Cavalry: up to 4 stands light javelin cavalry, B Grade, Average Morale

Choose 22 infantry stands (representing 11,000 men) from the following options:

Legionaries: 6-10 stands Roman infantry, A Grade, High Morale.

Auxilia Palatina: 2-6 stands Roman infantry, A Grade, High Morale.

Other Auxiliaries: up to 6 stands Roman infantry, B Grade, Average Morale. *Option to class auxiliaries as LI javelinmen instead.*

Auxiliary Archers: 2-6 stands foot archers, B Grade, Average Morale

Terrain

The battlefield should be relatively open and flat with the River Tiber at the rear of Maxentius's side (south side). There is a single pontoon bridge over the river which is otherwise impassable. The Tiber could be represented by the table edge.

If the Tiber and the pontoon bridge are not represented on table, the bridge's location should be marked at the centre rear of Maxentius' table edge.

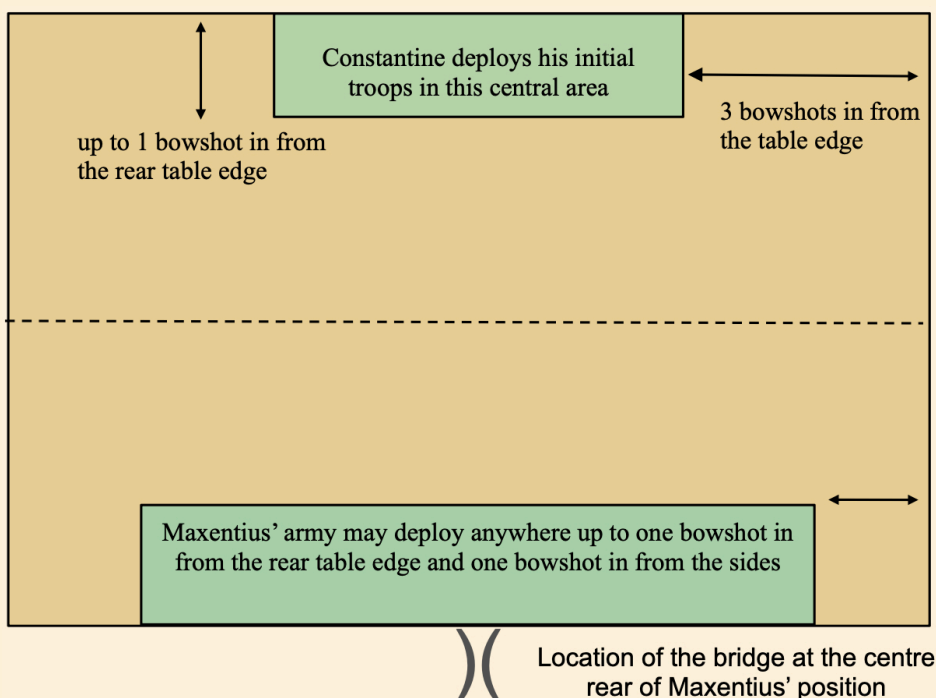
As the battlefield was very close to Rome, the table should represent farmland, perhaps with a few copses, buildings olive groves and vineyards. It could be cut with a few drainage ditches of small streams running North-South and draining into the Tiber. There appear to be no hills in the area of any note.

Most of the terrain features should be decorative rather than having a significant impact on the game.

Deployment

Constantine partially sets up first, deploying one of his contingents up to one 12" in from his rear table edge and 24" from the table side edges.

Then Maxentius deploys one of his contingents. It may be up to 12" in from the north bank of the Tiber (or table edge if the river is not on table) and up to 12" in from the table side edges.



This continues alternately by contingent with Constantine's second and third contingents being able to set up 12" in from the table sides.

Maxentius may hold back up to 2 units in reserve off table to his rear.

He may either specify their arrival turn in advance (this could be noted paper to keep it secret from the opposing player) or he may wait and send a messenger to call them up.

They arrive in column from the pontoon bridge.

The deployment sequence represents the fact that Constantine was camped north of the river and when he saw Maxentius deploying he then deployed his troops accordingly. The first of Constantine's commands being fixed in the centre of the table represents those close to his camp.

Constantine has initiative on the first turn. Thereafter dice for initiative.

Objectives

Maxentius needs to stop Constantine from crossing the Tiber while keeping his own army in tact. Constantine on the other hand needs to seize the bridgehead and break through.

Constantine wins if by the end of the 7th turn if:

- he has one unshaken unit on the bridge, or within 1 JT of it, or has crossed over to the other side; and
- at least 1/3 of Maxentius' units are shaken, broken or destroyed.

Maxentius wins if by the end of the 7th turn if:

- no unshaken Constantinian units have crossed the bridge or are within 4" of it; and
- he has the same or fewer units shaken, broken or destroyed than Constantine.

Any other result is a draw.

Special Rules

Units may leave the table voluntarily by exiting over the pontoon bridge. Once they have done so they may not return.

Routing or retiring troops whose path is blocked by the Tiber, will attempt to reach the bridge and cross it.

Roll a D6 for each unit routing or retiring over the bridge. If the result is '1' the bridge collapses and becomes impassable. All troops crossing it that turn are destroyed.



Roman Auxiliaries. They may be either classed as Roman Heavy Infantry or Light Infantry Javelinmen. Constantine's elite Auxilia Palatina may only be Roman Heavy Infantry.