

GREAT BATTLES MODULE

Alexander the Great in Italy, 319-318 B.C.

BY RICHARD BERG



In 323 BC, in Babylon, Alexander the Great died, thereby ending whatever further plans the young king's restless muse had engendered. Speculation thereupon has continued ever since, and one of the joys of simulation gaming is that we often get a chance to work out some of those possibilities. So, let us assume that Alex survived the rigors of a Persian lifestyle and went westward, as historians have stated he would do.

It is 322 BC. Alexander finalizes his plans to conquer North Africa first, plans which included the amassing of a huge galley fleet. With this fleet clearing the Mediterranean west of Egypt and Greece, he leaves his base at Alexandria and heads down the coast, in 321 BC, quickly gobbling up the Libyan tribes on the borders of Egypt.

He now faces the growing trading power of the Mediterranean, the city-state of Carthage. Carthage has been waging a seemingly endless war with the Greek colonies, and mostly the powerful city-state of Syracuse, for control of Sicily. Carthage, not unaware of Alexander, had even threatened to send aid to her sister-city of Tyre during Alexander's siege of that Phoenician stronghold. Likewise, however, Alexander becomes aware that the political situation in Syracuse has just changed. While previous Syracusan regimes were attempting to seek some common ground with Carthage, power is now in the hands of a military dictator, the Tyrant, Agathocles.

Alexander, spotting an opportunity, send envoys to Syracuse to conclude a treaty with Agathocles, assuring the latter's political hegemony in Syracuse by promising him military support. With his *rear* thus secured, Alexander begins a protracted, but not overly difficult, year-long land campaign, helped by a massive naval victory by his admiral, Nearchus, off Utica. Finally, in September, 320 BC, Alexander smashes a Carthaginian army, under one of Carthage's many Hamilcars, outside Tunes.

In typical fashion, now, Alexander folds Carthage into his ever-growing empire and sails to Sicily to seal his alliance with the Greek-oriented Syracusans. He does this by allowing them a large measure of self-control and "reinforcing" their army with a garrison of 5000 of his Greek-ally hoplites. He then spends the winter planning his invasion of Italy.

His timing is extremely propitious, as Italy is in turmoil. The growing military power of the city-state of Rome is being tested by her Samnite neighbors, with the other tribes waiting around to see which way the wind will blow. Despite a stunning defeat by the Samnites at the Caudine Forks, in 321 BC, the vaunted Roman legions, about which Alexander is starting to hear much news, have recovered and are planning to strike back at Samnium. In the middle of all of this - and much to Alexander's delight - his spies have informed him that the very Greek - and powerful - trading city of Tarentum has sent envoys to both sides demanding they desist from continuing this war. Tarentum has declared she will side with whichever side is attacked.

Aware of this simmering pot of political problems, Alexander plans accordingly. Allowing Agathocles to live out one of his tyrantial fantasies, he directs the Syracusans, together with the army of another powerful Siceliot state, Acragas, to attack the Bruttians across the Straits of Messana as a diversion, while he, and his army, lands at Metapontum, just west of Tarentum, in the spring of 319 BC. The Tarentines, as ever, employ the cloak of neutrality, waiting to see what will happen. They have heard of Alexander's conquests, and they agree that his interests lie more with the Greeks than the Romans, but the traders of Tarentum are cautious to a fault.

In Rome, where the Senate is busy making plans for renewal of the Samnite War, the news of Alexander's landing is greeted as less of a threat and more of an annoyance. The Greeks in Italy have always been troublesome, and the ruling classes agree that, when the Samnites are despatched, something will have to be done to quell the power of the Greek colonies. As the Samnites appear to be quiescent for the time being, the Senate votes to send a reinforced consular army, under Consul L. Papirius Cursor, south to put a quick end to the invasion. Several of the Senators remind Papirius that this is the army of the "Greek" who just recently destroyed the Persian Empire. Papirius, however, assures them that the Roman military system, unlike that of any in the known world, will soon make short work of the invaders. After all, it is a large Roman army, the equivalent of three double legions ... even if more than half of those legions are recently raised *Alae Sociorum* legions. And word has reached them that this Alexander, whose army is certainly not more than 20,000, is desperately trying to raise support from the locals, with little success.

Papirius thus quickly heads south to prevent Alexander from moving north. He intends to bar his way across the river Siris, outside the city of Heraclea

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and, to that end, he reaches the western banks of the Siris just as Alexander's Macedonians are approaching, some 5 miles to the east. Papirius, aware of their approach, now deploys his army in *textbook* Roman fashion, on the western side of the wide, but shallow, Siris and waits confidently for the enemy.

Alexander, informed of the Roman army across the Siris by his *prodromal* scouts, does not intend to stand on ceremony. He will make a short, rapid march, screened by his new allies, his Numidian Light Cavalry, and, as he has done so often before, make a cross-river attack.

The Battle of the Siris

May 22, 319 BC

Play Note: In order to play the battles discussed below, you will need to have at your disposal Deluxe Alexander, SPQR, as well the modules Pyrrhic Victory and Africanus, plus some Tarentine counters we included in C3i Nr.2), although the latter are needed only for the second battle.

Map:

Use the Heraclea map from Pyrrhic Victory.

Deployment:

The Romans use all the units, and the exact deployment, given for the battle of Heraclea in Pyrrhic Victory, with the following exceptions:

1. The cavalry for the III, AS/VII and AS/XIX set up, with Drusus, in 2238-41 and 2138-40. They do not start off-map.
2. For Papirius, use the Paullus consul leader from SPQR.

The Roman army numbers approximately 29,000+ men.

The Macedonians have the following units:

- Phalanxes: Attalus, Meleager, Ptolemy, Polyperchon, and Philotas
 - Greek Allied HI/HO:
 - 1-3 (Doubled-sized)
 - Hypasists: Agema, 1 and 2
 - Mercenary Peltasts (LP): 1-3
 - Mercenary Skirmisher Slingers: 1-2
 - Illyrian Skirmishers
 - Indian LI Archers: 1-4
- Companion HC: Agema and all the

"named" Companions (see Hydaspes)

- Prodromoi LN: 1
 - Greek Allied LC: 1-2
 - Numidian LC (green/SPQR): 1-2
 - Carthaginian HC (SPQR): 6-7
 - Indian Elephants (from Alex): 1-4
- Leaders: Alexander, Ptolemy, Craterus
- MCC's: Cleander (Greek Allied HI), Leonatus (Indian units), Nicanor (Hypaspists), Philotas (Companions). The Macedonian Army numbers approximately 23,300 men.

The Macedonian Army may set up anywhere it wishes, east of the river. However, no unit may be closer than three hexes to the river except for Skirmishers, which may deploy anywhere on the eastern bank.

Special Rules:

1. The Alexander Elite Initiative Rule is in Effect
2. The Seeing the Elephant Rule from the Heraclea scenario in PV is in full effect!! And see PV for terrain effects of the Siris river.
3. Romans must use the Triarii Doctrine rule in SPQR II.
4. Indian Archers do *not* use Slippage.
5. Romans use the SPQR Missile Chart; otherwise, use the Alex Missile Chart.
6. There is no Personal Combat.

Victory:

- The Romans Withdraw when they exceed 175 RP's
- The Macedonians Withdraw when they exceed 110 RP's

If Alexander is killed, the game is over.

Dear Reader: *If the Romans have won the Battle of The Siris, there is no need to read on. However, if the Macedonians have triumphed, continue.*

With Papirius heading back to Rome in defeat, Alexander sets about securing his base in the South. The Bruttians, subdued by Agathocles, decide to join with the Greek invaders, as do the Tarentines, who provide a large, but not overly promising, contingent of troops. The Samnites promise help, but they are

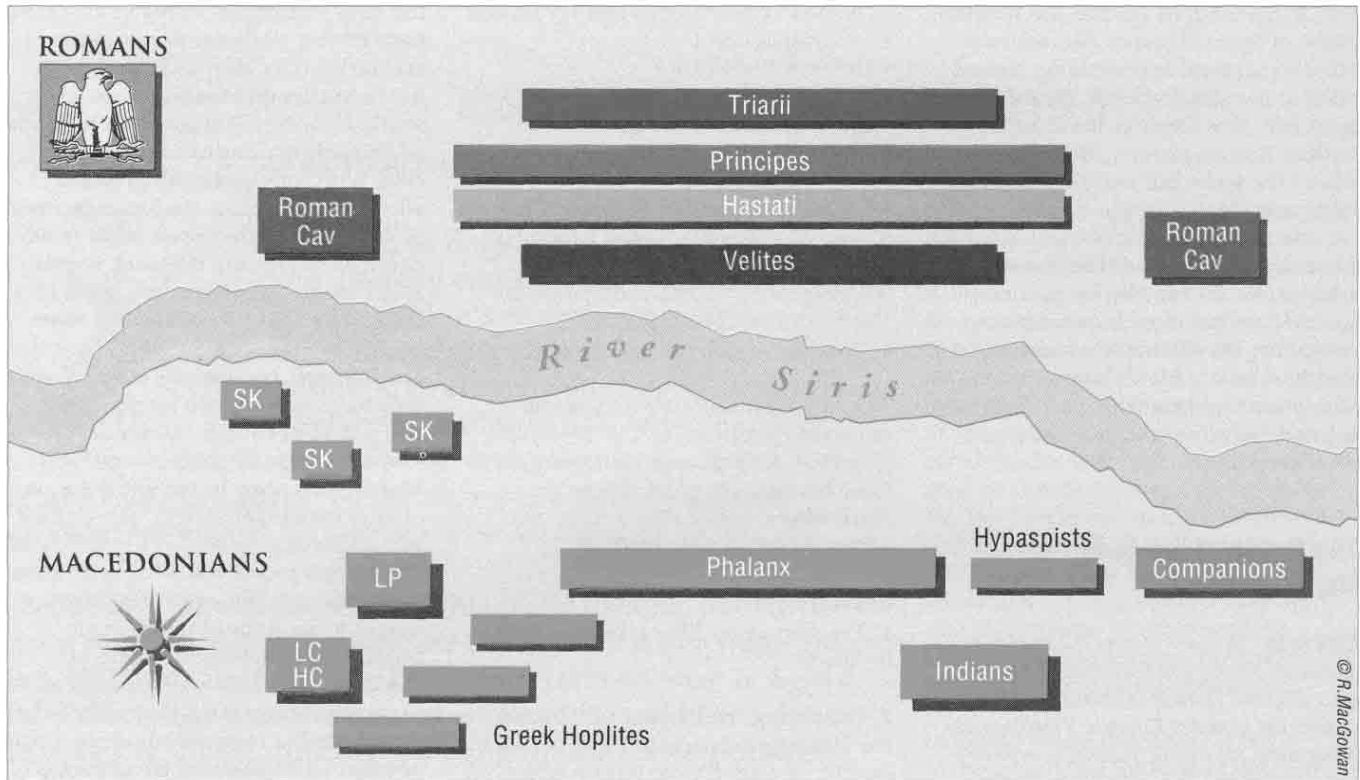
too busy fending off Roman attacks on their towns, while the northern tribes are too beaten down and attached to Rome to attempt to send troops so far south. However, Alexander does receive additional reinforcements from Syracuse, with Agathocles, all of which allow him to replace the losses incurred at The Siris. He then spends the remainder of 319 subduing the local, Roman-allied towns before heading north to take Rome.

The Romans, meanwhile, are now aware they have, at least, two big problems. The first is, of course, Alexander himself, whose combined-arms style Macedonian army is, at least, the equal of their manipular system, especially if Alexander can use his cavalry effectively. The second problem is what to do about the Elephants. The latter brings forth a host of ideas, none of which seem promising, as the Romans have no elephants on which to practice them. As for cavalry, there is only one solution. Avoid combat in any location other than one that will reduce the effectiveness of Alexander's striking force. Fortunately, this will be easier than it seems, as virtually all roads toward Rome lead through difficult terrain. The only question is, which road will Alexander take, and can the Romans react in time to take advantage of their knowledge?

Actually, there is a third problem. Having won the initial battle, one of the reasons that Alexander has waited to resume the campaign is that his immense Siege Train is now just arriving from Africa and Sicily. The Romans, having heard of Alexander's successes at Tyre, Gaza, Halicarnassus, etc., know that simply hiding behind the walls of Rome will not do. They must defeat him, or at least cripple him, in the next battle to stop the Macedonians from taking Rome.

Ready to move are two consular armies, four double legions, under the commands of M. Folius Flacinator and proconsul Q. Publius Philo. Marching against this army are Alexander's Macedonians, reinforced by a large number of local troops. The battle will, most likely (we being unable to halt the downhill riot of hyperbole) decide the fate of Italy (and, in doing so, raising some mighty interesting what ifs!).

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Battle of the Siris, 319 B.C. – Probable deployment of the Roman and Macedonian forces as determined from the works of Guessius.

The Last Battle

Spring 318 BC

The Map

Here we inject a little fun into the proceedings. The GBoH series has lots of maps, and, since the Romans are going to attempt to fight on ground of their own choosing, we will let them select the battlefield. However, with there being three different approaches towards Rome, and the Romans being unaware of which one Alexander will choose, we add some randomness and variety into the selection of the battlefield.

Some of you may not have all of these maps, and your choices will be, thereby, restricted. [A good excuse to go out and buy more modules.]

1. The Roman Player chooses three maps on which he is willing to defend, from among the following:

- *The Granicus*
- *Issus*
- *Baecula*
- *Cannae*
- *Beneventum*; the Roman may either deploy totally inside the camp (as with

Pyrrhus), or deploy outside the camp.

- *Trebbia*
- *The Metaurus*
- *Munda*

(We have not selected *Ausculum*, because crossing that river creates more play problems than it is worth.)

He does not reveal which three maps he has chosen, but he labels them '1', '2', and '3'.

Having done this, Alexander chooses which Road he wishes to take: 1, 2 or 3, thus choosing which map/battlefield will be used!

Deployment:

The Roman Player always deploys first. He may set-up as he wishes, but must deploy only in the areas delineated to one army, or the other, from the original scenario for that map. Thus, if the Roman chooses *Baecula*, he must set up in the areas previously reserved for the Carthaginians; at *The Metaurus* he would choose one side's deployment area or the other. Some flexibility and imagination may be called for here.

The *Roman Player* receives all the units from the VII, XIV, XV and XIX double legions. He gets 2 Tribunes, 2 Praefct Soc, two Prfct Eqtm, plus (for *Folius Flaccinator*), as Overall Commander, use the **Regulus** counter, and, for proconsul *Publilius Philo*, use the **Servilius** proconsul counter.

The Roman army numbers c. 39,000 men.

The Macedonian receives all the units he had for the *Siris*. However, having kept track of those units that were on-map eliminated (not just routed off the map), he takes those units and rolls a die for each one. If the DR is higher than the unit's TQ, that unit is not available for this battle. This includes *Elephants that Rampaged* which, for this purpose, are treated as if they had been killed. If Alex has lost any leaders, you may use, as replacements, *Coenus* and/or *Antigenes*.

In addition Alexander receives the following, additional units:

Italian Allies

- 2 Tarentine MI (*C3i* Nr.2)
- 2 Lucanian LC (*C3i* Nr.2)
- 2 Tarentine LC (*C3i* Nr.2)

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- 2 Samnite HI (**Africanus**)
- 2 Bruttium MI (Red, **SPQR**)
- 2 Lucanian MI (Red, **SPQR**)

Syracusan Allies

- 2 Athenian city-state HI/HO (double-sided; **Alexander**)
- 2 Cretan Archers (1-4-6; red; **SPQR**)
- Agathocles (use the Megacles counter from *C3i* Nr.2). Agathocles may command only these 4 units; he is *not* an MCC.

Alexander sets up after all Roman units have deployed. Alexander's army is close to 30,000 men now, depending on his losses at the Siris.

Special Rules

1. *Maps and Terrain*. Be sure to use all special rules relating to a particular map.
2. *Anti-Elephant devices*, the Roman Player may choose to use either:
 - the Ox-Carts from **Pyrrhic Victory** (counters provided in *C3i* Nr.2), along with their LI escorts (also provided in *C3i* Nr.2, or use the Arab Li's from **War Elephant**); OR
 - they may use the infamous Flaming Pig Rule in the *Beneventum* scenario of **SPQR**. They may use this only if they have a camp on the map.
3. The Roman Player may use *Devotio* (PV rules).
4. The Alexander Elite Initiative Rule is in Effect

5. Romans must use the Triarii Doctrine rule in **SPQR II**.

6. Indian Archers do *not* use Slippage.

7. Romans use the **SPQR** Missile Chart; otherwise, use the **Alex** Missile Chart.

8. There is no Personal Combat.

9. *Roman Reinforcements*: If, at any one time during the battle, in a Trump attempt, Alex rolls a double-9, instead of treating it as a "Crisis of Faith", it allows the Roman Player to bring in "Reinforcements" - late-arriving allies - at any time later in the game that the Reinforcement's leader (see below) would normally go. The reinforcements consist of the following:

- Numidian MI #sl-6 (brown; **SPQR**), plus leader **Culchas** (from **Africanus**), Culchas is the only leader who may command these troops. These represent some 3000 allied troops from a local, Rome-allied tribe.

Reinforcements enter whenever a '2' Initiative-leader can go. they may enter through any three connected map-edge hexes from any side of the map. However, they may not enter through any hex that would place them immediately adjacent to a Macedonian unit.

Victory:

The Romans: Withdraw when they exceed 240 RP's. This number

is not increased by the arrival of the Tribal reinforcements.

The Macedonians: Withdraw when they exceed RP's equal to 40% of their available Rout Points. Unfortunately, you will have to figure this out for yourself - using the **Alexander** rules for doing so - because we have no idea how many losses Alexander will have taken at the Siris. We do know that the additional units would add 25 RPs to the Siris number.

If Alexander is killed, the battle is over.

Campaign Outcome

If Alexander wins *The Last Battle*, and his losses, in RP's, are half - or less - than the Romans, he immediately moves his army to Rome and lays siege to it, a siege resolved in Alexander's favor by winter. Any other result, and you get to use your own imagination, knowledge, and ability to shout your friends.

Source Note:

Most of the febrile ruminations found above are based on information found in *Rome and Italy*, by Livy, a Penguin Classic paperback, B.H. Warmington's *Carthage: A History*, plus a host of Alexander books.