

GREAT BATTLES OF HISTORY FORUM

From Alexander the Great to Gustavus Adolphus

BY PETER PERLA

Basic battlefield encounters in the Great Battles of History Series. A study of the evolution and development of this multi-award winning system.

You first tasted blood with Alexander and the Companions at Issus. You sharpened your gladius and polished your scutum to no avail in the catastrophe at Cannae. Now, with your slow match alight and your unwieldy matchlock musket heavy on your shoulder you face new enemies across new battlefields as the Great Battles of History continue to roll on through the ages.

Today you stand beside the great Lion of the North himself, Gustavus II Adolphus. Through the mists of Lützen you peer at your enemy's battleline. You ask yourself that all important question: "What the hell do I do now?" Fear not, brave warrior, for I have come to tell you. Sort of. Maybe. Well at least a hint or two.

The Changes

If you have the good fortune to own a copy of Lion of the North and if you have read the rules you probably felt the same initial sense of familiarity that I did when first I saw them. The same cogent commentary, the same juvenile jokes (sorry, guys, I needed a *J* for alliteration — how about jolly? Yeah!) the same jolly jokes. Anyway, you read along feeling pretty good about the rules despite the hints of changes to come. You get through activation okay, and movement seems easy enough even with the new notion of terrain disruption. It may be a bit more involved than the old "add a TQ hit for crossing the river," but not too bad.

Then you get to the combat rules. Whoa — *Twilight Zone* time! Richard wasn't kidding when he said the combat system has undergone some significant changes. No longer is unit cohesion (and its erosion through close combat) the core of the game. Oh, it's there alright, and it's still important, but in a different form. Now the erosion comes through casualties and their debilitating effects on keeping units in good order. In a nutshell, here is the basic idea.

Units are rated for strength and cohesion (TQ). Cavalry and light infantry (basically musketeers) have one strength rating. Heavy infantry - primarily *tercios* and the Swedish combined-arms brigades - have two strength ratings. One is for fire strength (again, musketeers) and the other for shock (the *push of pike*). Each strength point represents about 100 guys appropriately armed. The front of a unit counter represents the unit in good order. The reverse, unlike the older games, represents the unit in a *Disrupted* state. To add to the mounting toll of Withdrawal Points needed for victory, you need to either kill a unit outright through casualties or make it rout (and thus head for the comfort of the map edge and home). To make a unit rout, you generally have to inflict a second disruption on an already disrupted unit.

There are three basic paths to becoming disrupted.

- First, some terrain may cause a unit to become disrupted automatically (like cavalry crossing a deep stream).
- Second, a unit may become disrupted by failing a TQ check.

- Crossing some terrain may require a unit to roll against its cohesion rating. If greater, the unit becomes disrupted. Similarly, casualties resulting from combat may also cause a unit to roll against its TQ.

- In Fire combat, if a unit takes more than one casualty in an attack, it rolls against its TQ with the number of hits as a positive die-roll modifier (thus, 2 hits, +2 to the TQ-check die roll).

- In shock, results on the Shock Table are expressed in terms of modifiers to a TQ-check roll. The wild-card is that a unit doesn't have to roll unless the number of hits listed on the shock table is at least half of its current TQ. For the Heavy Infantry (HI), the heart and soul of the armies, shock combat between full strength units is unlikely to produce more than meaningless die rolls. These mechanics convey very well the sense of a mad rugby scrum with spears (one polite way to describe much of the infantry combat before Gustavus showed up).

- The way out of this mess comes through the third, and surest way of disrupting an enemy unit: reduce it to less than half of its printed strength, primarily through close-in fire combat. Once a unit suffers this fate, it is immediately and permanently disrupted, reducing its TQ and making it far more vulnerable to a good old fashioned shove.

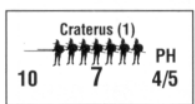
The Great Battles of Alexander, SPQR and Lion of the North

So what does all this mean in terms of basic battle tactics? Many authors have characterized Gustavus's military system as "the return of the legions." In fact, it was a more complex and subtle revolution, more akin to a return to the finely tuned, combined-arms army of Alexander himself. The arm of decision (the hammer) is the heavy cavalry. The heavy infantry brigades (the anvil) provide the crushing weight to complete the victory won by the cavalry. But — one major similarity to the Legion — the heavy infantry are powerful killing machines in their own right. Not through the close-in push of pike or stabbing of short sword, but through the new magic of firepower. To explore further the development of the game system and its model of the evolution of combat, let's take a look at some of the fundamental low-level tactical engagements from Alexander, SPQR and Lion.

Basic Battlefield Encounters: The Great Battles of Alexander

We begin at the very beginning, an examination of one-on-one confrontations between individual units.

Let's start with Alexander and consider three cases.



First, a Macedonian Phalanx (strength 10 and TQ 7) attacks a Greek Hoplite unit (strength 10 and TQ 6). Using average TQ losses and assuming that the Macedonians can attack repeatedly before the Greeks can respond we see the following results (expressed in terms of remaining TQ):

	Macedonian	Greek
Pre-shock TQ check	6.7	5.4
First shock attack	4.5	2.8
Second shock attack	2.3	0.2 (and a probable rout)

Thus, after two rounds of shock combat, the Greeks are probably heading for home, but the vaunted phalanx is not in any real condition to follow-up without some reorganization.

Now, how about our old buddies the Companion Heavy Cavalry (strength 5 and TQ 8) against some pitiful Persian light horse (strength 5 and TQ 6). The Companions are Attacker Superior, thus doubling the Persian TQ hits. This one doesn't even need a table. After the first round of combat, the Persians rout and the Companions still have an average of 5.7 TQ remaining. It's no wonder the Persians lost their hat, ass, and overcoat at the Granicus.



Things aren't quite so simple against some Bactrian heavy cavalry, however. The Bactrians have the same strength/TQ ratings as the Persians (5/6), but Alex's boys are no longer Attacker superior. Here

we are back to the hack and slash attrition of TQ we saw with the phalanxes.

	Companions	Bactrian
Pre-shock TQ check	7.9	5.4
First shock attack	5.7	3.0
Second shock attack	3.5	0.6 (and a probable rout)

So, once again, it probably takes two (or maybe three) rounds of shock before the Companions blow away their opponents. But like the phalanx, the Companions are a bit blown and probably need to recover a few TQ hits before they can really start hacking again. Unlike the phalanx, however, they can probably recover all they really need with the expenditure of a single command point, because they are likely to be sitting in the flank and rear of the entire enemy line, not right in the heart of the melee.

On the whole, then, it seems pretty clear that wanna-be Alexanders should count on the Companions for the key fighting to break the enemy flank and, once the phalanx

loses, to complete the victory by smashing the enemy against the Phalanx's spears or cutting them down as they scatter. The head-on charge of the phalanx can break an enemy line if it has no terrain advantages, but the phalanx itself will be in little condition for rapid pursuit. The cavalry is the first among equals (or to use some Roman wording, *primus inter pares*) of Alexander's combined arms force.

Basic Battlefield Encounters: SPQR



Now let's turn to SPQR. Here we will consider a classic encounter of two Hastati (each size 3 and TQ 5) against one Phalanx (PH, size 10, TQ 7). We'll use the latest rules modifications from Pyrrhic

Victory, which give the Phalangites an advantage on the first turn of shock. This 3L column shift, coupled with a 1L shift for the size differential (6 to 10) puts our legionaries on column 1 (Ouch!). *But* - the LG boys get to throw their pila first!

	Hastati 1	Hastati 2	Phalanx
Missile (pila) attack	5.0	5.0	5.8
Pre-shock TQ check	4.0	4.0	5.4 (.3)
First shock attack	1.7	1.7	3.8 (1.6)
Second shock attack	0.3	0.4	1.8 (2.0)



Thus, after two rounds of shock, the chances are good that our Roman friends have had enough of the long spears and have headed for the rear. But the Phalanx has also taken a lot of damage. Now watch what happens as the second line (the Principes) slams into the phalangites. Assume each of the two Principes is size 3 and TQ 6.

Great Battles of History Forum

	Principes 1	Principes 2	Phalanx
Missile (pila) attack	6.0	6.0	0.6
Pre-shock TQ check	5.4	5.4	0.3

Thus, the real power of Roman flexibility comes from the proximity of the second line of legion infantry to follow up the attack of the first line before the enemy can recover. The average results indicate that the Phalanx will probably rout even before the Principes engage in the shock attack.

What about the cavalry? Let's look at a strength 3, TQ 6 Roman Cavalry (RC) unit against a strength 5, TQ 7 Carthaginian Heavy Cavalry (HC) unit. Suppose the RC attacks (some praefect was hitting the vino a bit too heavily). Unfortunately for the Romans, it turns out that HC is defensively superior to RC. The result is that the RC basically bounces off the HC. (The expected RC TQ after a single round of shock is -1.5 (that's right, negative!) and the HC expected TQ remaining is 4.4.

On the other hand, if we reverse roles and let the RC defend against the HC, we end up with an encounter that is essentially similar to Alexander's Companions against the Bactrian HC – the Romans lose after two or three rounds, but they have hurt the attacking HC in the process.

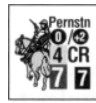
So, we can easily see the basic premises of Roman tactical doctrine growing from these simple one-on-one encounters. Tie up the enemy cavalry on the flanks as long as possible. Slam into his center with a one-two punch from the hastati and principes, preferably preceded by some effective javelin throwing from the velites. No fancy maneuvers, just plain hard fighting, pure and simple.

Basic Battlefield Encounters: Lion of the North

Now, on to Lion.

Because the role of TQ as the be-all and end-all of combat has diminished, examining the one-on-one engagements becomes a bit more complex. Most complex of all is the interaction between Swedish Heavy Cavalry, trained to charge home much like Alexander's Companions, and Imperialist Caracole Cavalry, trained to rely on the slow but sure attrition of their pistols. Imperialist Caracolers (CR) have four options when facing Swedish HC. They can:

- Try making a Caracole attack and face a countercharge;
- Try a charge (again a possible Swedish countercharge);
- Await a Swedish charge and meet it with pistol fire;
- Attempt to countercharge a Swedish charge.



I will not bore you to tears with the extensive and complex calculations of possible results for each of these cases. You'll just have to trust me (after all, I am a doctor – of probability and statistics). Assume

a 4-7-7 CR (Strength, TQ, Movement) against a 4-7-8 HC. In the tables, -# means a unit loses that # of Strength Points; a D means the unit is disrupted; Ret means the unit must retreat, Rout means the unit routs.

Case A: The Imperialists try a caracole and the Swedes try to countercharge:

	Imp. CR	Swede HC	Probability
Equal Results	D/Ret	-1/D	.14
	D	D	.14
	NE	NE	.04
<i>Total: .32</i>			
Favors CR	D	-1/D	.14
	NE	-1/D	.12
	NE	D	.12
	NE	-2	.02
	NE	-2/D	.05
Favors HC	NE	-2/D/Rout	.01
	<i>Total: .46</i>		
Favors CR			
D/R	D	.22	
<i>Total: .22</i>			

Although the single most likely outcome is the one listed last (both units are disrupted as a result of the Swedish countercharge and the CR must retreat), the overall results actually favor the CR, with a tiny chance the HC may rout!

Case B: The Imperialists try a full-blown charge with their CR (using the Lützen modifier of +2; doing this at Breitenfeld with the +4 is grounds for commitment — and I don't mean in game terms!) Swedes try to countercharge.

	Imp. CR	Swede HC	Probability
Equal Results	D	D	.56
	D/Ret	D/Ret	.07
<i>Total: .63</i>			
Favors CR	D	D/Ret	.02
	D	Rout	.02
<i>Total: .04</i>			
Favors HC	D/Ret	D	.12
	Rout	D	.16
	Rout	D/Ret	.05
<i>Total: .33</i>			

In this case, the most likely result is that both sides are disrupted and remain in place. BUT, there is a .21 chance that the CR will rout, compared to a .02 chance that the HC will rout. Even at Lützen, charging with CR does not appear to be a good idea.

The Great Battles of Alexander, SPQR and Lion of the North

Case C: The CR awaits the charge of the HC and meets them with pistol fire rather than a countercharge.

	Imp. CR	Swede HC	Probability
Equal Results	D	D	.25
	-1/D	-1/D	.03
	D/Ret	-1/D	.13
<i>Total: .41</i>			
Favors CR	D	-1/D	.16
	D	-1/D/Ret	.05
	D	D/Ret	.05
<i>Total: .26</i>			
Favors HC	D/Ret	D	.21
	-1/D/Ret	-1/D	.03
	-1/D/Ret	D	.05
	-1/D	D	.04
<i>Total: .33</i>			

Thus, if the CR awaits the Swedish charge and refuses to countercharge, firing pistols instead, the results are pretty even, with a slight nod to the HC.

Case D, the case of CR attempting to countercharge a Swedish HC, is so hopeless for the Imperialists that I did not even calculate the outcomes.



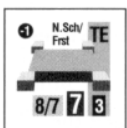
Thus, in straight-up one-on-one cavalry fighting, the Swedes achieve an advantage by striking the first blow with charging heavy cavalry rather than allowing themselves to receive a caracole attack.

Even more so than in the earlier games, however, the cavalry of the Imperialists and the Swedes is quite evenly matched. If each side uses its strengths and exploits enemy weakness, the side with the fresh reserves will carry the day. The cavalryman's credo?



Now, how about the poor bloody infantry? First, a situation from Breitenfeld. A Swedish HI brigade (Oxenstierna, a 10/5 (fire/shock strength) with TQ of 8) moves

against a Tercio (N. Sch./Frst., an 8/7 with a TQ of 7). The Swedish unit begins at a distance of four hexes and advances two hexes to maximum musket range. It begins the ball by conducting a salvo attack, which doubles its effective firepower (although there is a column shift of two to the left because of the movement). In the table below, the numbers in parentheses give the probability the unit is disrupted (in this attack/cumulatively after all attacks). [Chart on right —



We end the analysis at this point. First, it's getting a little monotonous isn't it (not to mention tedious)? Second, because the Imperialist tercio has been reduced to half strength and so is permanently disrupted. In fact, if the Swedes

followed up their fire with a shock attack at this point, the outcome would look like this:

Probability Tercio routs in preshock TQ check: .3
 Probability Swede HI is disrupted by preshock TQ: .1
 Probability undisrupted Swede is disrupted in attack: .03
 Probability a disrupted Swede is disrupted again: .42
 Probability Tercio routs after shock: 0!
 So, the overall outcome of a shock attack by the HI at this point is:
 Tercio routs and Swedes disrupted: .03
 Tercio routs and Swedes unaffected: .27
 Tercio and Swede both disrupted: .06
 Tercio remains disrupted and Swedes rout!: .03
 No effect: .61

Not too, risky, perhaps, but why take any chances? Clearly, as long as nothing changes the Swedes can simply stand there and pound away at the tercio, probably wiping it out in another two turns or so.

In Lützen, things change somewhat. The Imperialists have given up the tercio for a more linear formation, similar to but not as potent as Gustavus's brigades. In addition, most of the HI units on both sides are smaller and thus less powerful than at Breitenfeld. The Swedes still have the advantage in a straight-up fight, but they no longer dominate as clearly as they do at Breitenfeld.

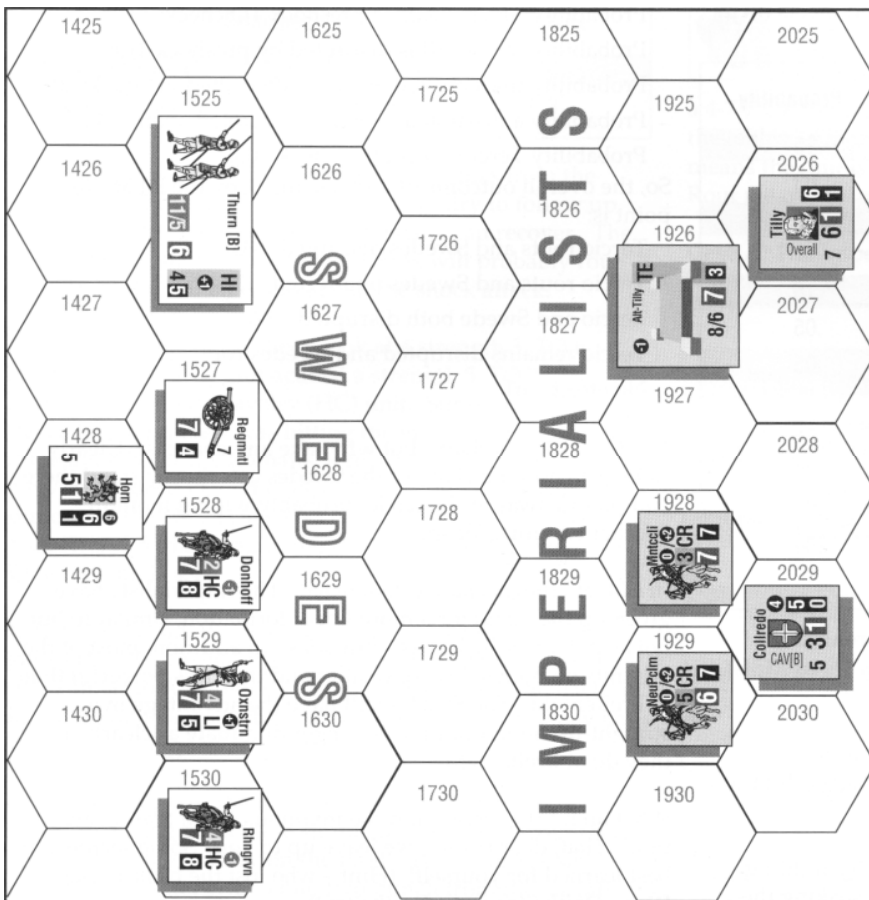
What about the tercios and the infamous *Death Star* formation? That, dear reader, we leave up to you. Some secrets are best learned for yourself! (Hint — who lost the battle in Star Wars, *Death Star* or no *Death Star*?)

Comparison

The Lion system is clearly more subtle and intricate than either Alexander or SPQR. The interplay of casualties and disruptions makes for a richer combat environment. It is one that rewards the player who is willing and able to create and seize opportunity as richly as it punishes the hesitant. Tactically, rather than wear down your opponent with punishing shock attacks to break his TQ, you must first disrupt him with fire and then hit him with a solid one-two punch to break him. In that sense, it sounds much like the Roman tactical system. First the *pila*, then the *hastati*, and finally the *principes*.

	HI Brigade	Tercio
Swedes salvo	10/5 (0/0)	7.4/7 (.02/.02)
(Tercio return fire: no effect)		
Swedes fire (momentum)	10/5 (0/0)	6.8/7 (.02/.04)
Tercio reaction fire	9.7/5 (0/0)	6.8/7 (0/.04)
Turn 2 (Assumes the Imperial player does not initiate any counterattack.)		
Tercio reaction fire	9.4/5 (0/0)	6.8/7 (0/.04)
Swedes salvo	9.4/5 (0/0)	5.2/7 (.12/.16)
Swedes fire (momentum)	9.4/5 (0/0)	4.8/6 (.08/.23)
Tercio reaction fire	9.1/5 (0/0)	4.8/6 (.0/.23)
Turn 3 (Again no counterattack.)		

Great Battles of History Forum



Tactical Primer Map — Tilly vs. Horn at Lutzen

On the other hand, the number of combat units available to the player (particularly infantry) is relatively small compared to the force commanded by a Roman consul.

To achieve success, then, the player must draw on skills from both previous games. As with Alexander, aggressive action with cavalry on the flanks is crucial. As with SPQR, the irresistible push of the heavy infantry plays a central part. But with Lion, the need to coordinate infantry and cavalry is, if anything, even more essential.

Artillery, as a whole, is basically a nuisance, much like missile units in Alexander and SPQR — except for the Swedish regimental guns, which can accompany the heavy infantry in their assault. When expertly employed (a skill level that takes much practice to achieve), the regimental guns can prove a decisive edge in the straight-up infantry firefight that tends to be the climax of battle.

Much harder to describe in a useful way (at least for me) is the proper employment of Commanded Muskets. Something of a cross between Peltasts and skirmishers, the CMs can be a surprisingly important element of effective combined-arms tactics. They are especially useful for supporting the Swedish heavy cavalry, one of Gustavus's favorite tactics.

Graduation Exercise

To wrap up this tactical primer, and to try to give you a sample of the full range of tactics Lion has to offer, we'll look at a purely fictional action, using a few units on each side. The forces and deployments are given below. Use the Lützen map and face the opposing sides toward each other.

Swedes

Thurn HI (B) hexes 1525-1526
2 x Regimtl arty hex 1527
Donhoff RC hex 1528
Oxenstrm LI hex 1529
Rhngrvn HC hex 1530
Horn (Leader) hex 1428

Imperialists

Art-Tilly TE hex 1926
Mntclli CR (4 SP) hex 1928
NeuPclm CR hex 1929
Collredo (Leader) hex 2029
Tilly (Leader) hex 2026

The fighting begins with the Artillery Bombardment phase. The Swedes fire to no effect. Colredo launches his CR against the Swedes, moving them to 1629 and 1631. The Swedish LI fires a salvo at Mntclli: 4 SPs x 2 for the salvo gives a total fire strength of 8. The DR of 3 produces a hit, despite the -1 modifier

for firing at CR. Donhoff attempts a countercharge and succeeds on a DR of 4. Mntclli now fires with 3 SPs and a fire-rate modifier of 0. Score one hit on Dönhoff Rhngrvn also attempts a countercharge, but his DR of 9 results in a disruption.

NeuPclm executes its caracole, firing at 5 SP with a +2 DRM. The result is $7 + 2 = 9$, for 2 hits. Rhngrvn rolls a D6 and gets a 4. Plus 2 for the SP losses produces a final result of 6. Rhngrvn routs! NeuPclm moves back to 1730 and refaces toward the Swedes.

In the Shock phase, Dönhoff becomes the attacker (because of the successful countercharge). The resolution begins with column 6 but is shifted 2 columns to the left for size differential (1 to 3). The die roll is an 8, producing a 2(2) result. Because Donhoff is AS2, the defender's result becomes 4. Mntclli must now roll against his TQ with a +4 DRM. On a roll of $4 + 4 = 8$, Mntclli is Disrupted (because the result exceeds his TQ of 7).

Collredo roles for momentum, but fails. Now it's the Swedes' turn to strike back.

Horn activates Thurn and the regimental guns to attack the Imperialist infantry. The guns move first, advancing to 1727 and firing. The first gun rolls a 0/5 on his D10/D6 roll and produces a result of 0 (artillery gets to roll both types of dice

The Great Battles of Alexander, SPQR and Lion of the North

together — neat, huh?). The second gun rolls an 8/6, which is shifted to 8/4 because of movement. The final result is a 2. The Imperialist player uses this result as a DRM for a D6 check, but passes by rolling a 1. Thurn follows by moving to 1725-26 and making a salvo attack. The fire value of $11 \times 2 = 22$ and a 5L column shift for range and movement combine with a lousy die roll of 1 to produce a clean miss. Alt-Tilly returns fire at a strength of 4 with a 3L shift. Not surprisingly, he too misses.

Horn also activates the Oxstrn LI to fire double salvo for 16 SPs against the Imperial CR with a -1 DRM. The result is an $8 - 1 = 7$, producing 2 hits. Mntclli is now reduced to a single SP, but he passes his morale check. Mntclli's return fire is ineffective.

Now, our old buddy Dönhoff conducts a shock attack against Mntclli (but without a charge). The results are determined on column 6 with no shifts. The die roll of 8 produces a 2(3) result. The 3 is half of Mntclli disrupted TQ, so he must roll a $D6 + 3$. The result is $3 + 3 = 6$, so Mntclli passes.

Horn spends his last CP to try to rally Rhngrvn. The die roll is 0, plus 2 for range, -1 for charisma. The result is 1, which is less than or equal to the TQ of the routed unit. Miraculously, the Swedes rally!

Even worse for the Leaguers, Horn rolls for momentum, and succeeds.

Oxstrn fires again. This time, however, there is no salvo and so he fires only with 4 SP and a +1 DRM. The result, however, produces a hit and eliminates Mntclli. It also opens things up for a combined attack on the Tercio.

Thurn advances to 1826-27. Alt-Tilly fires and scores a hit. Thurn fires and scores 2 hits in return. Tilly rolls a 3 for his morale check and so remains undisrupted. But Dönhoff now drives forward and charges Alt-Tilly's flank. He receives the fire of 2 SPs with a -1 for fire rate adjustment and suffers no loss.

In the Shock segment, the Swedes cannot check for charge, because they began the phase in Mntclli's ZOC. Nevertheless, the Swedish units pass their preshock TQ check. Unfortunately for the Imperialists (whose earlier luck now seems to have deserted them), Alt-Tilly fails the check by rolling an 8! The Swedes have position superiority (attacks from both front and flank simultaneously). They use the HC vs. TE Flank column (column 6). Total shock strength is even at 6 to 6. The DR is a 5, producing a 2 (2), modified to a 2(4) for position superiority. The Swedes need not check, but Alt-Tilly must roll the $D6 + 4$. Alt-Tilly routs and Dönhoff advances.

Horn rolls once more for momentum and — wouldn't you know it — succeeds! Dönhoff, smelling blood, swings right to slam into NeuPclm from behind. Oxstrn advances against their front, and Thurn pushes on against Alt-Tilly.

Dönhoff succeeds in charging home and Neu Pclm is dis-

rupted in the preshock check. The Swedes attack on column 9 with a AS2 superiority. The Imperialist cavalry disrupts for a second time, thus routing. The Swedes will now have to pursue (see below).

Meanwhile, Thurn's attack on Alt-Tilly produces the predictable result. Alt-Tilly fails the preshock and is eliminated.

The Swedish HC that drove NeuPclm into rout must advance into the vacated hex and roll for pursuit. They choose to add Horn's Charisma (+1) because he is in range. The result is a $7 + 1 = 8$: Eliminate and Break Off. Gustavus' boys have made a clean sweep of the Imperialist force.

That's a Wrap

Well, that's about it. Of course, you may not find things quite so easy as the Swedes in the example above. (Unless you play Breitenfeld. Sorry, I still can't beat them at that one.)

I hope this basic discussion has helped reorient you from the glory days of hack and slash (**Alexander** and **SPQR**) to the more complex but equally rewarding days of charge and flash (charging horses, flashing guns — get it? Oh well, as a *punster* I'm just not in Berg's class). But I warn you. I'm no expert at 17th Century warfare, or on the game itself. You'll have to develop the more complicated tactical combinations on your own. At best, I've tried to lay out some of the building blocks. It's up to you to fit them together. Good luck — and good fighting!



Crisis: Korea 1995 Inserts

You'll note that there are several player aid sheets for **Crisis: Korea 1995** inserted in this issue. The four scenario sheets include consolidated versions of game tracks and scenario details for each of the basic scenarios. These play aids were created by Dean Stathakis, an avid gamer and student of the current situation on the Korean peninsula; and graphic layout is by John Kranz. They are designed especially for those with limited gaming space so that you need not have both maps spread out on your game table when playing one of the game's one-map scenarios. They include all tracks necessary for play as well as numerous scenario details that would otherwise need to be unearthed from within the rules manual.

You'll also find a combat computation sheet which serves as your basic checklist for determining final combat odds and helps a great deal in organizing each combat. We extend our special thanks to Dean for his initiative and effort and John for his graphic help in creating these for us, and hope you find them to be useful gaming tools.