

TACTICAL FORUM

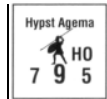
Macedonian Counterplan for Issus, 333 B.C.

BY CARL GRUBER

Urich Blennemann's article in *C3i* Nr.2's *Tactical Forum* proposed a Persian free set-up and a challenge to other readers to crack it. Unable to ignore a red flag waved in my face, I proceeded to construct a Macedonian set-up to break the new Persian deployment.

Under the free set-up, the Macedonian is allowed to reposition just four of his units, the rest taking the positions given in the scenario instructions.

Accordingly, I chose the three Hypaspists and an Archer, and placed those units as follows:



Agema Hypaspists	2830
Hypaspists 1	3118
Hypaspists 2	3417
Macedonian 1 Archers	3215

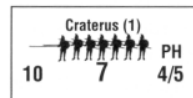
Comparison of Forces and Deployments

The Blennemann-Persian deployment makes some radical changes to the historical set-up. To begin with, the upper fords (where Alexander historically crossed with his cavalry) are guarded by all but two of the Persian missile units and then backed up by a small cavalry reserve. A Macedonian attack here would be like sticking one's head in a hornets' nest. The bad terrain of the approach combined with a hurricane of missile fire would leave the Macedonian horse completely vulnerable to a Persian countercharge. So much for the Persian left.

The Persian right has the Greek Mercenary Hoplites in abatis and supported by a large cavalry reserve. The only Macedonian units in position to im-

mediately attack here would be the Thessalian and Greek Allied cavalry units. Thanks but no thanks!

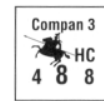
This leaves the Persian center. Here, Ulrich has deployed the Cardacenes Light Infantry interspersed with two of the Royal Guard heavy cavalry and two archer skirmish units. This line is also supported by a large cavalry reserve. The Persian defending force, coupled with the prospects of crossing the Pinarius and then attacking uphill from the river bed reserve, is rather daunting, but the Macedonians do have advantages in attacking the center.



To begin with, the Macedonian phalanxes are already in position opposite the Persian center. As I have deployed the line, the phalanxes are also supported by the Hypaspists. The phalanxes and hypaspists will have attack superiority against all but the heavy cavalry, and the superior TQ of the Macedonian units will enable them to survive anything but flank attacks (more on that later). One fly in the ointment is Ulrich's deployment of the archers in front of the Persian center. Although these are not powerful units, their presence will make it impossible to reduce cohesion point losses.

To compare the forces themselves, the Macedonians have the obvious superiority in leadership and unit quality. Therefore, not only can they move more units more often per turn, but the units themselves can take more punishment and are easier to rally once routed. The Persian force is numerically larger, but their TQs are worse and they have few units capable of gaining attacker superiority in combat. Poor leaders (except for Nabarzanes) means less of an ability to react to Macedonian moves, and a far smaller likelihood of rallying routed troops. The low TQ of most of the Persian troops, along with the poor

leadership, also discourages their crossing the Pinarius in any great force to counterattack along the Macedonian flanks.



Opening Moves

The first order of business is to run off the archers in hex 3014.

This can be done using

the Macedonian archers and two or three of the peltasts from the Macedonian front ranks. A combination of missile fire and melee should do the job, while the phalanx/hypaspist line advances to the river's edge. The remaining peltasts should fan out right and left to protect the flank of the main advance. At the same time, all of the Companion cavalry and at least three of the Thessalians should be brought up behind the phalanx to create a reserve that will be essential later in the battle. The Greek Allied Hoplites should be left in place as a defensive reserve should the Persian attempt a counterattack south of the river (any Persian counterattack across the river would be hazardous anyway due to the TQ hits the terrain would inflict on the units and, given the Persian leadership, the slowness at which such an attack would proceed). If the archers are routed and the phalanx is next to the river, the attack is ready to begin. One final note on preparing the attack: do not rush across the river with units already having cohesion hits! They will be routed and possibly even eliminated by the Persian cavalry. Set the attack up very deliberately and be sure you have the reserve forces to sustain the force of the attack (or as they say in Pela: "Klotzen nicht kleckern!").

Across the Pinarius

The attack should begin at the start of a turn with the phalanxes fresh and without cohesion hits. As said before, the flanks are to be covered by the Thracian and Mercenary peltasts, and the Macedonian horse has to be in reserve back of the main line. Entering

The Great Battles of Alexander

the river will garner the phalanxes (and hypaspists) two cohesion hits each, but the attack against the Cardacenes light infantry will give the Macedonians attack superiority and will rout the Persians. The victorious phalanxes will then incur another hit for advancing up one terrain level from the river plus the one-two points incurred in combat. Therefore, they should each have about five cohesion hits each, making them very susceptible to rout if counterattacked. This makes the Companion and Thessalian cavalry reserve critical for plugging any holes that might be caused if a phalanx is routed. Needless to say, trump whenever possible with Alexander, not only to prevent Persian counterattacks from gaining any real impetus but also to recover cohesion from the units that crossed the river. Still, expect to see a phalanx or two rout. No one said this would be easy!

Once a solid front of Phalanxes and Hypaspists has been established over the river with the cavalry behind it, the Persian will find it almost impossible to dislodge the Macedonians. If the Persian has not moved up any missile units from his left, pause long enough to recover cohesion and then renew the attack.



Killing Fields

The combination of a solid front of Phalanxes can now advance like a thresher. By

this time, enough Persian units should be routing that Darius and friends should have their hands full trying to rally units, let alone counterattacking. A useful tactic at this point might be to pull the Hypaspists from the line and use them to hit the flank of the Greek Mercenary Hoplites on the Persian right. Again, back this attack up with cavalry to prevent the Persian horse from turning your advance into a rout. By now, if the Persian had any intention of moving south over the Pinarius and successfully attacking the flanks of the Macedonian army, he would already have done so, therefore the Greek Allied Hoplites can now be brought over the river to back up the main line. Stop them often enough to remove cohesion hits so that they will be fresh if required to fill in the line. By this point, the

Persians have had enough and the game is over.



Potential Danger Points I played this scenario out three times and won all three with the Macedonians. There are some pitfalls you'll want to avoid.

- 1) Because a unit must advance after winning a melee, Phalanxes will sometimes be advanced ahead of the line with their flanks open to attack. The Persians have a lot of cavalry that can go after these isolated units. Try to have enough of your own cavalry, Hypaspists or Peltasts around to cover those flanks. Naturally, keeping these reserve units low on cohesion hits is also important. Furthermore, if it looks like a unit is in danger of being flanked, trump with Alexander.
- 2) The Persian chariot unit is very hard on cavalry. Try to avoid it in head-on confrontations.
- 3) If the Persian player brings his missile units over from the left, try to have a force which can either drive them off or screen them. Remember, a unit within range of a missile unit cannot recover

cohesion, so archers and slingers can stop your advance by not allowing you any fresh units for attacks.

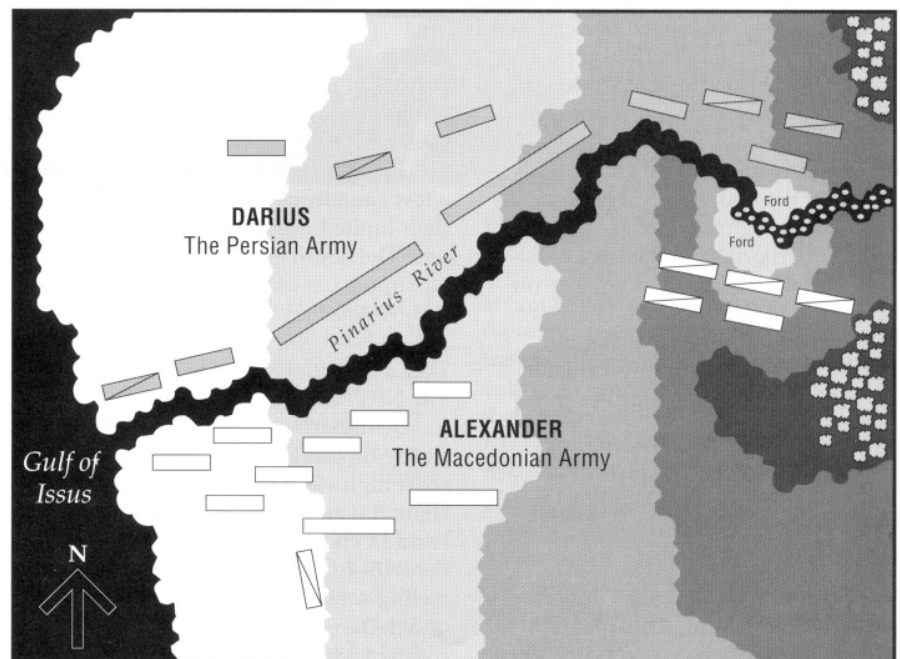
4) Do not advance and attack in a hurry. Remember, the Persians cannot move anywhere near as many units per turn as the Macedonians, nor can they gain momentum very efficiently, all of which hampers their reaction to your moves. Because you are advancing across a river against a very large force, take your time and always keep a fresh (no cohesion hits) reserve force.

In conclusion, despite the fact that all three playings led to Macedonian victories, Herr Blennemann's deployment made the job a good deal harder. I really enjoyed taking on this "puzzle." Hopefully, *Tactical Forum* will give us more of these problems to breath new life into games from the Great Battles of History series. In the meantime, I am trying to devise an Epirote deployment to beat the Romans in SPQR's Beneventum scenario.



Note:

For the Persian player's side of this debate please refer to issue two of C3i.



Battle of Issus GameMap
Order of Battle, November, 333 B.C.
The river is crossable (in a military sense) only downstream and at a narrow, upstream ford.

Map Legend:

