

# SPQR SCENARIO

## Pydna, 168 B.O . — Legion vs. Phalanx

BY DAN FOURNIE

### The Final Showdown

The Battle of Pydna was the last in a series of major encounters between the two most highly developed tactical systems of the classical world: the Macedonian phalanx and the Roman legion. The phalanx had achieved victory at Asculum and Heraclea, while the legion had triumphed at Beneventum, Cynoscephalae and Magnesia. Supporters of the Macedonian system could discount the three defeats. At Beneventum and Cynoscephalae, the phalanx had been committed on terrain that favored the legion. And the troops at Beneventum and Magnesia weren't "real Macedonians" at all (merely Epirotes and Seleucid Syrians). Many felt that, given suitable terrain, a truly *Macedonian* phalanx remained superior to the legion in a set piece battle. At Pydna, this theory was to be put to the test.

### Historical Background Causes of the Third Macedonian War

The roots of the 3rd Macedonian War (172-167 BC) can be traced back to the conclusion of the 2nd Macedonian War (200-196 BC). After King Philip V had been decisively defeated by the Consul Flaminius at Cynoscephalae, the Macedonians had been forced to accept a peace treaty that imposed severe restrictions on the kingdom. Macedonian activity in Greece and Thessaly was strictly forbidden, and limits were placed on Macedonian military and naval activity.

Philip decided to bide his time, and even supported Rome against the Seleucids in the Syrian War (192-188 BC). Philip, acting in Rome's behalf, seized a number of cities near the Hellespont and in action against Aetolia. After the war, Roman commissions humiliated Philip by forcing him to turn over some of his conquests to Pergamon. Philip began secretly preparing for war. But he was distracted by the internecine fighting of his two sons, Perseus, the eldest, and the pro-Roman Demetrius. Perseus eventually had his brother Demetrius assassinated (181 BC), and then Philip his father died in 179 BC.

Perseus took over the throne from his father, as well as the plan for war with Rome.

As it became clear that a great war was in the offing, both sides strove to shore up their allied support. Although Perseus was a fairly disreputable character, he became very popular as the last great hope to prevent Roman domination of the world. With the fall of Carthage and Seleucid Syria, only Macedon could hope to face Rome as a great power. None of Rome's Greek *allies* rallied to her support, as had been the case in the earlier war. Only King Masinissa of Numidia and King Eumenes of Pergamon joined the Roman alliance. While Perseus was strongly favored by the many small kingdoms and republics of the Hellenistic world, few were foolish enough to join his military alliance, for fear of Rome. Only King Cotys of the Odrysae Thracians and King Gentius of Illyria actually joined Macedon.

### Opposing Armies

Macedon had enjoyed a quarter century of relative peace and fielded one of the largest armies in its history. A full 21,000 manned the phalanx, and there were also

5,000 crack peltasts (equivalent to hypaspists) and 3,000 cavalry. Auxiliaries, including Thracians, Paeonians, Agrianians and mercenaries added an additional 13,000 foot and 1,000 horse. This army was blooded in recurring skirmishes with Thracian and other barbarians, but not attrited through any heavy fighting.

The Roman army, as usual, consisted of two Roman legions supported by allied Italian forces. For this campaign the legions were reinforced to a strength of 6,000 men each, with an equal force of allies — a total of 24,000 legionnaires. The cavalry included only 600 Roman and 600 Italian horse, as Rome was learning to rely on more capable auxiliary horsemen. These auxiliary forces included some 10,000 foot, mainly Numidians and Pergamenes. The mounted auxiliaries totalled about 2,000: Numidian light cavalry, Celtic troopers and a unit of Pergamene heavy cavalry. Masinissa had provided a force of African war elephants as well. The auxiliaries were commanded by Misagenes, Masinissa's son, and Attalus, Eumenes' brother.

### Initial Campaigns and the Prelude to the Battle

Rome got off to a poor start in this war as Perseus and his marshals were able to outfight the consuls Publius Licinius (171 BC), Aulus Hostilius Macinus (170 BC) and Quintus Marcius Philippus (169 BC) in a series of skirmishes. The Roman army showed signs of indiscipline and a lack of thorough training.

Then Lucius Aemilius Paullus was elected consul in 168 BC, and assigned the Macedonian command. Paullus was the son of the consul slain at Cannae, and had experience as a Praetor campaigning in Celt-Iberia and as a Consul against the Ligurian. When Aemilius Paullus assumed the command, his first task was to restore strong discipline and to institute a rigorous training regimen.

Once he was satisfied with the state of his army, he advanced directly against



Perseus. The Macedonian army was entrenched in a strong position on the Elpeus River. Aemilius Paullus sent Scipio Nasica with a detachment to turn Perseus' flank, forcing the Macedonians to withdraw to Pydna. Perseus encamped and offered battle on the plain, favorable to his phalanx. Aemilius Paullus declined the battle and pitched his camp in nearby rough terrain.

### The Course of the Battle

The two armies then spent a few days glowering at one another, until a chance incident brought on the general battle on 22 June 168 BC (we know the exact date from an eclipse the preceding night). The two armies were camped on opposite sides of a small stream, the Aeson, that both used for watering. Aemilius Paullus had five cohorts of allies and 700 Ligurians in outposts along the stream, while Perseus had some of his Thracians and other light infantry facing them.

A Roman pack mule escaped from his grooms and ran into the stream. Two Thracians seized the animal at midstream and began to drag it towards their lines. A small group of Italians chased and caught the Thracians, slaying one and returning with the beast to the Roman side. The outpost of 800 Thracians became enraged and charged across the stream. The fighting spread, and Perseus reinforced with more and more of his troops, finally committing his entire army. The outpost Italian cohorts were overwhelmed by the massed phalanx, and the Macedonians drove them further and further back.

Aemilius Paullus, realizing that more than just a skirmish was developing, rushed his troops out of camp and into line of

battle. The Consul led the left-wing legion out, while the Proconsul Lucius Albinus commanded the legion on the right. Scipio Nasica and Attalus took command of the left-wing cavalry and auxiliaries, while Prince Misagenes led the right. But the Macedonian phalanx proved unstoppable.

The hurriedly deploying legions were thrown back before the impenetrable wall of sarissas. But even as the phalanx pushed the legions back towards their camp, it began to break up and lose cohesion as the terrain worsened. On the Roman right, Misagenes unleashed his elephants to break up the Thracians before him. Aemilius Paullus and Lucius Albinus rallied their hard pressed legionnaires and began a series of small counterattacks into the gaps developing in the phalanx.

The Macedonian line was halted, and then the Roman short swords began to do their devilish work. Perseus' left collapsed, and then his center. Only on the right did the agema fight on as the rout became general. All 2,000 of these elite Macedonians were cut down where they stood, buying time for Perseus to make good his escape. Reportedly, 20,000 Macedonians were killed and 11,000 captured, while the Roman army suffered impossibly light losses of only 100 killed. Perseus, with some of his cavalry, escaped.

### Aftermath

It was a decisive victory for the Romans. The Macedonian monarchy was abolished, and four small republics were carved out of the ancient kingdom. But Macedon had been the historic bulwark of Greece against marauding barbarian

tribes. Unintentionally perhaps, Rome now had the burden of policing the Balkan frontier with her own troops.

Pydna was the final confirmation of the superiority of the legion over the phalanx. But it had been a very close run thing. Each legionnaire had faced ten spearpoints, until the phalanx began to break up. It was said that none who faced the Macedonian phalanx that day could ever forget the sight of the inexorable wall of spears bearing down upon them. Later in life, Aemilius Paullus is said to have suffered from nightmares in which the Macedonian phalanx drove right over his army. But Rome had won, and became the sole superpower of the ancient Mediterranean world.

### Sources

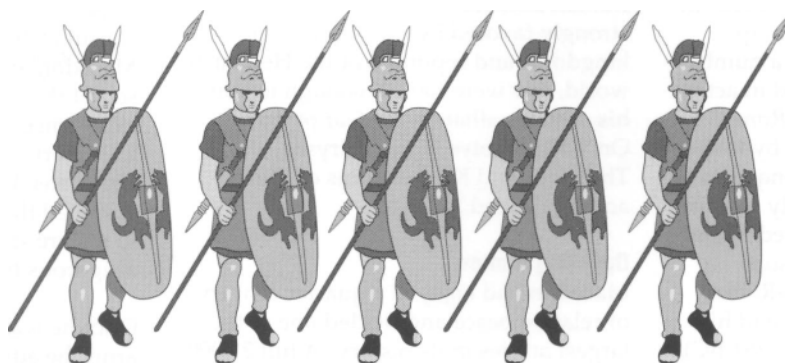
Unfortunately, Polybius' account of Pydna did not survive. Livy provides an excellent, detailed order of battle for Macedon (most likely from Polybius). However, his description of the battle is fragmented, and critical sections are missing. Plutarch, the biographer, is generally useless as a military historian, but he does provide a few details.

### Counters

Pydna can be played with existing **SPQR** counters. A few counters from **War Elephant** (as specified in the scenario chart) are nice to have.

### Start

The game begins with the Macedonian Player using an elite Initiative Order (5.5), with Perseus as the selected leader, even though Perseus is not an elite OC. He may use this only in the first game turn.



# SPQR Scenario: The Battle of Pydna

## THE BATTLE OF PYDNA, 168 BC

**MAP** – Use the **Cynoscephalae** Map from **SPQR**. The actual site of this battle has never been determined. The Roman Army uses the North map edge as its retreat edge. The Macedonian Army uses the South map edge.

**COUNTERS:** You can find all the counters you need in **SPQR**. If you have the **War Elephant (WE)** Module, counters that can be used for this battle are listed as well.

**NOTE:** This scenario opens as the phalanx is driving back the outpost line and the legions are just forming up. The Roman camp would be on high ground, from 3217-28 and 4217-28.

### Initial Deployment

#### Macedonian Deployment

Unit(s)	Hex(es)/With any...	Use SPQR Counter(s)
<b>King Perseus [OC]</b>	Anywhere	<i>Philip V</i>
* King Cotys	...Thracian/Odrysaes unit	<i>Tychaeus</i>
Hippias	...PH or HI	<i>Nicanor</i>
Asclepiodotus	...MI or LI	<i>Athngras</i>
Leonnatus	Anywhere	
Alexander (son of Perseus)	Anywhere	
[* King Cotys may only issue orders to Thracian and Odrysaes units.]		
<b>• MACEDONIANS AND GREEKS</b>		
Macedonian PH (1-14*)	1018-19,1020-21,1022-23, 1024-25,1026-27,1228-29, 1030-31 (double depth)	* Use 2 African PH stacked underneath
Agema (Epirote HI) (1-3)	1032-34	<b>WE Egypt. Agema HI</b>
Peltasts (Maced.LI) (1-4)	1035-1038	<b>WE Egypt. Peltast</b>
Mercenary Hoplite HI (1)	1017	
Aetolian Hoplite HI (1)	1016	
Guard Cavalry HC (1)	1016	
Macedonian Cav. HC (1-3)	[ALL cavalry within 1 hex of 1041]	
Thessalian Cav. HC (1)		
Macedonian Cav. LC (1)		
<b>• AUXILIARIES</b>		
Paeonian & Agrianian LI (1-4)	1231,1233,1235,1237	use Illyrian
Cretan LI (1)	1215	
Cretan LI (1)	1217	use Appolonian
Cretan Archer SK (1-3)	1225,1227,1229	
Cretan SK (1-3)	1219, 1221, 1223	<b>WE Egypt. Cretan SK</b>
Celtic MI (1-3)	1013-15	
Thracian LI (1-4)	1209-12	
Odrysaes LI (1-2)	1207-08	Iberian / <b>WE Thrac.MI</b>
Odrysaes LN (1-3)	[All cavalry within 1 hex of 1204]	use Iberian
Mercenary LC (1-2)		

#### LINE ELIGIBILITY TABLE:

##### Macedon:

- PH, HI, MI, and Macedonian (Peltast) LI
- Odrysaes and Thracian LI
- SK and any LI\*
- All Cavalry

\* May form lines occupying every other hex

##### Rome:

- Velites and LI\*
- Hastati and Cohorts\*
- Principes and Cohorts\*
- Triarii\*
- AS RC, Pergam. HC & Celtic LN
- Roman RC and Numidian LC
- LI and Elephants\*
- Numidian MI

#### Victory Conditions

A player wins by routing the opposing army.

#### Army Rout Levels

• **Macedonian Army:** Routs when units with TQ points totalling 162 have been eliminated.

• **Roman Army:** Routs when units with TQ points totaling 175 have been eliminated.

#### Army Size and TQ Levels

Army	Size	TQ Points	Rout Ratio	Quality Ratio
<b>Macedon</b>	301	405	40%	1.35
<b>Romans</b>	291	505	35%	1.74

#### Roman Deployment

Unit(s)	Hex(es)/With any...	Use SPQR Counter(s)
<b>Consul Paullus [OC]</b>	Anywhere	
Proconsul L. Albinus	Anywhere	<i>M. Atilius</i>
* Misagenes	...Numidian unit	<i>Masinissa</i>
* Attalus	...Pergamene unit	<b>WE Eumenes or Maharbal</b>
Scipio Nasica	Anywhere	<i>Laelius</i>
Tribunes (2)	...any hastati/principe	
Praefects Soc (3)	...any cohort/velites	
Praefect Equit (1)	...any RC	
[* Prince Misagenes may only issue orders to Numidian MI/LI, elephants and any cavalry. Attalus may only issue orders to Pergamene LI and any cavalry.]		
<b>Outpost Line</b>		
AS VII Cohorts (a-e)	1407,1313,1422,1526,1430	
Ligurian MI (1-2)	1509,1411	
<b>V Legion</b>		
Roman Velites (a-c)	2318, 2320, 2422	
AS Velites (a-b)	2415, 2316	
Hastati (a-d)	2519, 2621 (2 per hex)	
Principes (a-d)	2719, 2821 (2 per hex)	
Cohorts (a-i)	2517, 2616, 2717, 2816 (2 per hex), 2818 (1)	
Roman Triarii (a-c)	2918 (1), 2919 (2)	
AS Triarii (a-b)	2917 (2 per hex)	
Cohort Extra (1)	2624	
(attached)		
VII AS Cohorts (f-g)	2814 (2 per hex)	
<b>III Legion</b>		
Roman Velites (a-c)	2429, 2431, 2532	
AS Velites (a-b)	2427, 2525	
Hastati (a-d)	2628, 2726 (2 per hex)	
Principes (a-d)	2828, 2926 (2 per hex)	
Cohorts (a-i)	2630, 2731, 2830, 2931 (2 per hex), 2730 (1)	
Roman Triarii (a-c)	3029 (1), 3030 (2)	
AS Triarii (a-b)	3028 (2 per hex)	
Cohort Extra (1)	2624	
(attached)		
VII AS Cohorts (h-i)	2933 (2 per hex)	
<b>Auxiliaries</b>		
Numidian MI (1-6)	2707-2712	
Numidian LI (1-4)	2406, 2408, 2410, 2412	
African Elephants (1-5)	2405,2407,2409,2411,2413	
Pergamene LI (1-4)	2634-2637	<i>N.Africa / WE Perg. LI</i>
<b>Left Wing Cavalry</b>		
III AS RC (a)		
V AS RC (ex)	[All cavalry within 1 hex of 2940]	
Celtic Cavalry LN (1)		
Pergamene HC (1)		<i>Sacred Band/WE Perg.</i>
<b>Right Wing Cavalry</b>		
III Roman RC		
V Roman RC	[All cavalry within 1 hex of 2704]	
Numidian (brown) LC (1-3)		