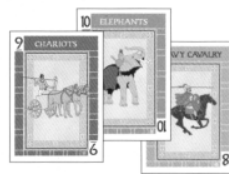


The *Battle Line* of Gaugamela:

Variant and Solitaire Rules

By Robert Hulston



Ed. Note: BATTLE LINE has quickly become the game of choice when two players are awaiting the arrival of others for my group's weekly multiplayer game. It is easy to learn and quick-playing, while the Tactics cards can lead to some wild attempts to retrieve victory from the jaws of defeat. In this issue we offer two variants to spice up your play experience. — SKT

The following rules convert *BATTLE LINE* into something closer to an historical simulation for two players, one playing the Macedonians and the other the Persians.

Setup: Use all the Troop cards valued 5 and 6 to form the basis of the Macedonian deck; use all Troop cards valued 1, 2, 9 and 10 to form the basis of the Persian deck. Shuffle the remaining cards of the Troop deck and deal 14 cards into the Macedonian deck and ten cards into the Persian deck. Shuffle both players' decks. Set aside the Alexander and Companion Cavalry Tactics cards. Shuffle the remaining Tactic cards to form the Tactics deck.

Solitaire *BATTLE LINE*

The following rules allow *BATTLE LINE* to be played as a quick and simple solitaire game. Set up the Flags, shuffle the Troop deck and deal a hand of four cards to the player. The Tactic cards are not used and the non-player (NP) has no hand.

Play alternates between the NP and the player, with the NP going first. At the start of the NP turn the player draws a card and then places it in play on the NP side of the Flags. The Player then takes his turn playing one card from his hand in a slot on his side of the Flags before drawing a new card to replenish his hand. A Flag is won immediately by either side when it is apparent that a formation created there cannot be outmatched, the player taking into account all cards in play and in his hand. Cards that are still in the deck that have the potential to outmatch a formation prevent a Flag from being won, as normal.

Deal: Deal six cards from the Macedonian deck to the Macedonian player and then add Alexander and Companion Cavalry to establish a Macedonian hand of eight cards. Deal a hand of six cards to the Persian player. Thereafter each player can draw only from his own separate deck or the Tactics deck which is shared as normal. Persia goes first.

Play Restrictions: Each Flag is numbered from 1-9 from the Macedonian player's left to right. Flags 1, 2, 8 and 9 are "flank" Flags; Flags 3 through 7 are center Flags.

- A player must play at least one 7 or 8 card (cavalry) for each flank Flag. A player who is unable or opts not to play a cavalry card for one or more flank Flags may only play a two-card formation for that Flag (leaving empty one card position).
- Alexander/Darius count as cavalry when played in flank Flags regardless of the number selected.
- Cards 4 and 5 (heavy infantry)

NP Card Placement: The first NP card is placed on any Flag desired. Each subsequent card must be placed at a Flag so as to create the strongest possible formation available that has a chance of capturing a Flag, taking all information into account (cards in play, in the player's hand and in the deck).

Initially, until each Flag has at least one card on the NP side, the player may only attempt to create a Wedge or Phalanx on the NP side. When a card is drawn that does not build toward a Wedge or Phalanx, then place it next to an empty Flag instead. Completing a Wedge takes precedence over adding a second card that could lead to a Wedge. Adding a second card to a Wedge takes precedence over completing a Phalanx and so on. Where there is an equal choice opt for the formation with the highest sum total.

An overall priority, though, is to avoid (until the last possible moment) playing a card in a slot which will result in the immediate capture

can only be played in center Flags.

- A player can use the Scout on his own deck or the Tactics deck only.
- The Macedonian player can play Darius as a Persian Troop card in any empty Persian slot, defining the number and colour of his choice at that moment.
- Alexander cannot be selected for Desertion or returned to the Tactic deck via the Scout.
- Alexander may be played, even if the Macedonian player has played one more Tactic card than the Persian player.

Two-Card Formations: A two-card formation counts as a Host and can beat a three-card Host if it has a higher sum.

Victory: The Macedonian player wins the game by capturing seven Flags, the Persian by capturing four Flags. Any other result is a draw. The three-adjacent-Flags rule does not apply. When all the available slots on one side have been filled, or a player has no eligible card to play in an available slot, the other player continues to play unopposed until victory is determined. As normal, as soon as a Flag has been won, any empty slots at that Flag are unusable.



of the Flag by the player. When there is an equally evil choice the player must place the card where it will do the player the least good.

When placing a card in the initial slot of a Flag, outmatching any player card there takes precedence over matching it or placing a weaker card against a stronger one. *For example, a 5 should be placed to oppose a 4, 3, 2 or 1 (generally in that order for the sake of efficiency), before considering placement opposite a 5. The 5 should be placed against an opposing 9, 8, 7 or 6 only when there is no choice or when the possibility still exists to outmatch the player's formation there.*

Victory: The player wins the game by capturing six Flags, the NP by capturing four Flags. The threeadjacent-Flags rule does not apply. When all the available slots on one side have been filled, the other side continues to play unopposed until victory is determined. As normal, as soon as a Flag has been won, any empty slots at that Flag are unusable.