

SPQR BATTLE PLAN

The Battle of Zama, 202 B.C.

BY DAVID FOX

Rome: Looks like a pretty good set-up for the boys from Rome. For once, they've got the edge in cavalry, with lots of those juicy legion-types and a great commander (Scipio), to boot. Rome does have the edge here, but don't get too cocky — Hannibal can still pull this one out if you're not careful.

The Romans have two big advantages; that strong wing of Numidian cavalry, and three lines of solid legion infantry. The only area for worry is the left wing cavalry, where the Roman Cavalry is sure to get gobbled up by the Carthaginian heavy cavalry. And of course there's all those elephants over there... got to do something about them, too.

So, the first order of business is to neutralize those tuskers. Hannibal will probably try to use them to contain the Roman Numidians, so pull them back if the elephants get too close. Use the Roman Noise rule to shake them up, then hit them with the velites — a couple of javelin volleys ought to clear the elephants right out.

As for the left wing RC, if you know that the Carthaginian HC's are going to make mincemeat out of them, try to extend and reinforce the front line of RC's so that the Carthaginians have to take a lot of time (and hits) doing it. Then use your left wing cohorts to refuse the flank — as long as they don't throw their pila they'll be defense superior, and they ought to keep that end locked down.

With those two problems covered, the rest is relatively easy — it should be a lesson in the methodical use of legion infantry. Your legion commanders are all 2's and 3's, so they'll be able to move before the Carthaginians. Use the velites — those that are left after disposing of the elephants — to drive off the skirmishers, then hit the Carthaginian infantry lines with three successive waves of cohorts. Resist the urge to go for momentum early on — you probably don't need to, and it will only give Hannibal a chance to move before his time comes. The Roman Numidian cavalry can provide the *coup de grace*. There are enough of them to smother the Carthaginian Numidians then swing around and hit the phalanxes from the flank and rear.

For the Romans, the key is to be slow and methodical. Don't try to win too early; remember, you are only going to win with your cohort infantry, so use everything else to clear the way for them. This is a battle that Rome should win. Be careful, and the odds are in your favor.

Carthage: Things don't look good. Sure, you've got a strong wing of good heavy cavalry and plenty of elephants, but most of the Numidians are on the wrong side of the battlefield and you've got two lines full of really crummy infantry (the Celts and levies) to deal with. You can still win, but you're going to need some luck doing it.

Lead with your strengths — the elephants and the heavy cavalry. Activate the elephants with Hannibal's elite leader initiative (if you get it), and advance them against the Roman Numidians. They should retreat before combat, but you can still drive them back a few hexes and gain yourself some breathing room. As for the elephants that can't reach the Numidians, leave them out there as a barrier that the Roman infantry will have to fight their way past to get to your own infantry.

If you are going to win, the heavy cavalry will almost certainly be the weapon that you do it with. Get past the Roman cavalry as quickly as you can, surrounding them if possible — you won't have to check for pursuit that way. Go for momentum with your cavalry commander (I'd put Hasdrubal out there) every time. You have to get these guys moving early, and who knows, you

might get lucky and see Scipio roll a '9' on a trump attempt, finishing him for the turn. Then swing around and hit the open cohort flank.

Your biggest concern of course, is the legion infantry. They will move first every time, and if you let them, they'll go through your Celts and levies like a tornado. Worse, your best infantry is in the rear, where they will most likely never get into the fight. If you're lucky, the elephants and skirmishers will stick around long enough to break up the velites and entangle the first line of hastati. My advice with the levies is to try to do what Hannibal had in mind — get them out of the way. Try to move the levies to the rear, withdrawing them behind the phalanxes. This will accomplish two things — you'll get those losers out of the way, and leave Hannibal enough room to rally the Celts if (or rather, when) they rout. Remember, you are trying to hang on with your infantry long enough to let your heavy cavalry win the battle for you, and phalanxes/heavy infantry are the only ones that can stand up to the cohorts for very long.

Still, you'll need some luck. Roll for momentum with your cavalry commander and Hannibal every time. Your right wing cavalry commander must keep busy, and Hannibal will have plenty to do rallying routed units. Maybe you can get Scipio or Massinissa to blow a trump die roll, knocking them out of the fight early. A Carthaginian victory sounds tough, but it can be done.

