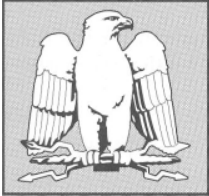


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The Roman Army in SPQR

BY DAVID FOX



So, this is the beginnings of the army that would go on to conquer most of the known world. When you set up your first battle - probably Bagradas - what strikes your eye first is the legion infantry, row upon row in the time-

honored order of *velite*, *hastati*, *principe*, and *triarii*. They are the finest troops of the ancient world, and Europe wouldn't know their equal again in training, discipline, and ferocity until the Swiss *landschnecks* of the Renaissance, 1500 years in the future. In the battles that appear in **SPQR** and its modules, while they may often be outnumbered or outgeneraled, because of that infantry, the Romans will never be outclassed.

The Roman cavalry is very weak and unless you have some good foreign auxiliaries on your side, like the Numidians at Zama, you can expect going into battle outnumbered and outmatched in cavalry. And with the notable exception of Scipio, chances are your leadership will also be inferior to your opponent's. But the legionnaires are good enough to overcome even these obstacles if you use them properly. The four distinct types of Roman infantry were modeled after their class in Roman society, from the poor in the *velites* to the more mature veterans in the *hastati*, to the upper-class *principes* and the old warhorses in the *triarii*. The **SPQR** rulebook does a good job of describing each type and its particular role on the battlefield. Take some time to read those descriptions, because the key to winning with a Roman army is to understand each type and what it can do.

Roman Infantry

Velites

Good, solid light infantry, talented javelinists with a shock capability as well. Best-used to scatter the opposing skirmishers and soften up the enemy's line with their javelins. They are particularly effective against phalanxes, with their ability to enter a ZOC, fire, and retreat. They can keep this up all day

long, if spared. They are very useful against elephants, too. Remember to leave lanes open in the ranks of the *hastati* — behind the *velites* — to leave room for them to withdraw or rout.

Hastati

These are your shock troops, and they will probably bear the brunt of the actual

fighting in most battles. After the *velites* have done their work, you should send them crashing into the enemy's line. Don't be afraid to be reckless with these guys — you've got a lot of them, and they are attack superior to most other weapon types. But remember — once they throw their *pila* they are vulnerable to enemy cavalry, so be a little circumspect if you see horsemen hovering off on the flanks.


Principes

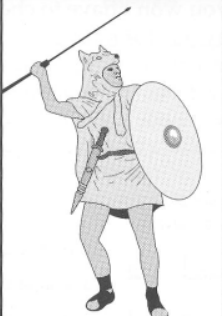
The *principes* are usually your *coup de grace*, administered to finish off an enemy already reeling from the *velites* and *hastati*. They are best used to break stubborn defenders or destroy routing enemy units. Their high TQ's make them very valuable on the defensive as well, as a good line to rally behind if you get into trouble.


Triarii

You'll find that you rarely use these guys, and if you do, you're probably in trouble. As Heavy Infantry, and with the *Triarii* Doctrine rule, they just aren't as flexible as the legion infantry. They are defense-superior against cavalry, though, and you may find yourself delivering a timely

VELITES


 ROMAN





VE

 Skirmisher


Light infantry with helmet and a shield. Although they had swords, their basic weapon was the javelin, and they were used as skirmishers to harass the enemy and disguise movements.

SPQR

HASTATI


 ROMAN



HA

 LG
 Second Line

The second line of troops had light body armor and the highly identifiable Roman shield (*scutum*) of the period. In combat, they moved forward, to within 75 yards of the enemy, threw their *pila* (javelin) and then smashed into the enemy line.

SPQR

Analysis of the Roman Army in SPQR

"The art of generalship does not age, and it is because Scipio's battles are richer in stratagems and ruses — many still feasible today — than those of any other commander in history that they are an unfailing object-lesson."

B.H. Liddell Hart
Scipio Africanus

about-face order to them to seal off the rear of your army against marauding enemy horsemen. Otherwise, they just aren't very useful, and you'll find yourself rarely having enough line commands left over to move them anyway.

Roman Cavalry

The less said about the Roman cavalry, the better. Although technically they qualify as heavy cavalry, in reality they just aren't up to tangling with heavy cavalry the caliber of what Carthage and Macedon can throw at you. The RC's really are cannon-fodder, and are probably best-deployed where they can cause the enemy maximum damage before routing off the field. In some battles, however, notably Zama, Pydna, and Magnesia, you will have some high-quality foreign horsemen on your side, which you will be able to use very effectively. You can see why, in a later generation, the Romans reverted to exclusively hiring foreign cavalry contingents.



Scipio Africanus

Publius Cornelius (c. 235-184 B.C.) Roman consul and general. Smashed Hannibal's army at Zama, ending the 2nd Punic War.

Roman Leadership

The Romans never put a very heavy priority on the quality of their commanders, relying instead on the strength of their doctrine to win the battle, no matter who was in charge. The good news is that with so many 2 and 3 level leaders, you will almost always have anywhere from two-to-six line commands before your opponent can move, a situation that you can take advantage of by attacking with wave after wave of legion infantry before your enemy can react. Your cavalry commanders are usually about as much value as their troops — next to none. And your overall commanders are a mixed bunch, from reprobates like Varro to such shining lights as Fabius and Scipio. With the former, and their pitiful strategy ratings, you may very well be stuck with two or three line commands per turn. With the latter, you will be able to do all sorts of trumping and momentum.

General Strategy

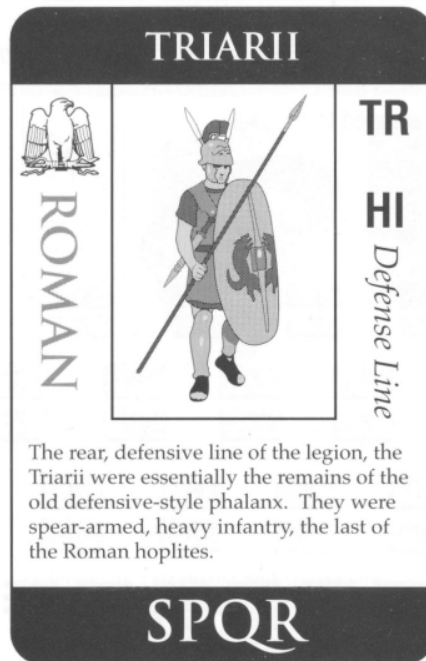
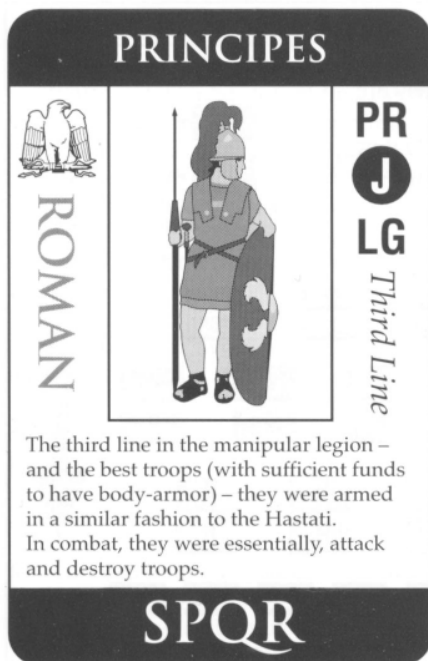
With certain exceptions, like Zama and Metaurus, as the Romans you will see the same basic situation — facing a strong combined-arms army that is superior to you in cavalry and command ability. Your best strategy against this is a methodical, step by step advance.

Step 1 - Commit the *velites* to chasing away the enemy skirmishers and breaking up the opponent's front line

Step 2 - Charge with the *hastati*, laying some more hits on the enemy and possibly even routing some of them.

Step 3 - Hit the enemy hard with the *principes*. These guys should be strong enough to break the your opponent's lines and mop-up many routing units.

Always remember that your flanks are very vulnerable. The RC's out there won't last long, so unless you want enemy cavalry gnawing on your legions from the side, detach some cohorts to refuse the flank, always remembering to have these guys hold onto their *pila* (that way they're





defense-superior vs. most cavalry). This will narrow your frontage, but it's worth it to keep those horsemen at bay. Also, be sure to keep lanes open in your rear ranks for the troops up front to withdraw or rout through without causing hits to fresh troops behind them.

have the edge in leadership, you will be able to take a few chances knowing that you're good enough to trump your way out of trouble.

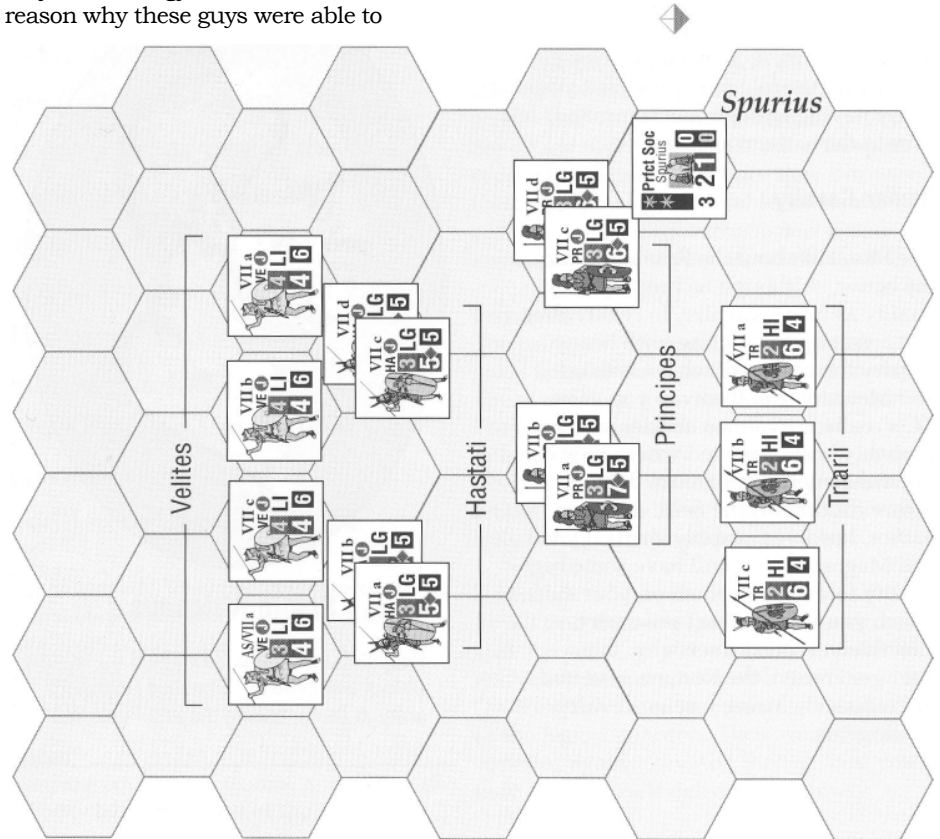
conquer most of the known world — it worked. By sticking to a methodical, unhurried application of Roman strengths, and compensating for their weaknesses, victory will rarely be out of the question.

Be methodical, and don't panic. Things may look bad as your cavalry collapses and the Numidians zip around behind you, but hang on — your infantry can still prevail. Resist the urge to go for momentum with your praefects and all but your last tribune, as they may only give Hannibal a chance to trump and move out of turn. Almost always go for momentum with the last tribune, however, which could give your last line of *principes* that final little shove that breaks the enemy. And in those fortunate circumstances like Metaurus, Pydna, and any battle with Scipio, where you

Although the Romans and their doctrine may seem stodgy to some, there's a reason why these guys were able to

Example (right) of a Roman Legion in SPQR — The Leh Legion set-up at Trebbia:

The battle is begun by the *velites*, who try to break up the enemy formation as it advances. They then retire through the gaps; the *hastati* close the gaps and charge. If the *hastati* are not successful, they then retire through the gaps in the *principes*, who in turn close their gaps and charge. If the *principes* are unsuccessful, they can now either change places with the *hastati* and let them have another go or withdraw through the gaps of the *triarii*.



The Roman Legion Battle System

Hastati and Principes in open order, *Triarii* in close order. The *Velites* skirmish and distract the enemy, then are recalled to the rear.

T	Triarii
P	Principes
H	Hastati
≡	Velites

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