

Battle of Nicopolis 48BC:Pharnaces Recovers Pontus

Historical Background: (From "The Alexandrian War")

Chapter 34 While these things passed in Egypt, king Deiotarus applied to Domitius Calvinus, to whom Caesar had intrusted the government of Asia and the neighboring provinces, beseeching him "not to suffer the Lesser Armenia which was his kingdom, or Cappadocia, which belonged to Ariobarzanes, to be seized and laid waste by Pharnaces, because, unless they were delivered from these insults, it would be impossible for them to execute Caesar's orders, or raise the money they stood engaged to pay." Domitius, who was not only sensible of the necessity of money to defray the expenses of the war, but likewise thought it dishonorable to the people of Rome and the victorious Caesar, as well as infamous to himself, to suffer the dominions of allies and friends to be usurped by a foreign prince, sent ambassadors to Pharnaces, to acquaint him, "That he must withdraw immediately from Armenia and Cappadocia, and no longer insult the majesty and right of the Roman people, while engaged in a civil war." But believing that his deputation would have greater weight, if he was ready to second it himself at the head of an army; he repaired to the legions which were then in Asia, ordering two of them into Egypt, at Caesar's desire, and carrying the thirty-sixth: along with him. To the thirty-sixth legion Deiotarus added two more, which he had trained up for several years, according to our discipline; and a hundred horse. The like number of horse were furnished by Ariobarzanes. At the same time, he sent P. Sextius to C. Plaetorius the questor, for the legion which had been lately levied in Pontus; and Quinctius Partisius into Cilicia, to draw thence a body of auxiliary troops. All these forces speedily assembled at Comana, by orders of Domitius.

Chapter 35 Meanwhile his ambassadors bring back the following answer from Pharnaces: "That he had quitted Cappadocia; but kept possession of the Lesser Armenia, as his own, by right of inheritance: that he was willing, however, to submit every thing to the decision of Caesar, to whose commands he would pay immediate obedience." C. Domitius, sensible that he had quitted Cappadocia, not voluntarily, but out of necessity; because he could more easily defend Armenia, which lay contiguous to his own kingdom, than Cappadocia, which was more remote: and because believing, at first, that Domitius had brought all the three legions along with him, upon hearing that two were gone to Caesar, he seemed more determined to keep possession; and insisted "upon his quitting Armenia likewise, as the same right existed in both cases; nor was it just to demand that the matter should be postponed till Caesar's return, unless things were put in the condition in which they were at first." Having returned this answer, he advanced toward Armenia, with the forces above-mentioned, directing his march along the hills; for from Pontus, by way of Comana, runs a woody ridge of hills, that extends as far as Lesser Armenia, dividing it from Cappadocia. The advantages he had in view, by such a march, were, that he would thereby effectually prevent all surprises, and be plentifully supplied with provisions from Cappadocia.

Chapter 36 Meantime Pharnaces sends several embassies to Domitius to treat of peace, bearing royal gifts. All these he firmly rejected, telling the deputies: "That nothing was more sacred with him, than the majesty of the Roman people, and recovering the rights of their allies." After long and continued marches, he reached Nicopolis (which is a city of Lesser Armenia, situated in a plain, having mountains, however, on its two sides, at a considerable distance), and encamped about seven miles from the town. Between his camp and Nicopolis, lay a difficult and narrow pass, where Pharnaces placed a chosen body of foot, and all his horse, in ambuscade. He ordered a great number of cattle to be dispersed in the pass, and the townsmen and peasants to show themselves, that if Domitius entered the defile as a friend, he might have no suspicion of an ambuscade, when he saw the men and flocks dispersed, without apprehension, in the fields; or if he should come as an enemy, that the soldiers, quitting their ranks to pillage, might be cut to pieces when dispersed.

Chapter 37 While this design was going forward, he never ceased sending ambassadors to Domitius, with proposals of peace and amity, fancying, by this means, the more easy to ensnare him. The expectation of peace kept Domitius in his camp; so that Pharnaces,

having missed the opportunity, and fearing the ambushade might be discovered, drew off his troops. Next day Domitius approached Nicopolis, and encamped near the town. While our men were working at the trenches, Pharnaces drew up his army in order of battle, forming his front into one line, according to the custom of the country, and securing his wings with a triple body of reserves. In the same manner, the center was formed in single files, and two intervals were left on the right and left. Domitius, ordering part of the troops to continue under arms before the rampart, completed the fortifications of his camp.

Chapter 38 Next night, Pharnaces, having intercepted the couriers who brought Domitius an account of the posture of affairs at Alexandria, understood that Caesar was in great danger, and requested Domitius to send him succors speedily, and come himself to Alexandria by the way of Syria. Pharnaces, upon this intelligence, imagined that protracting the time would be equivalent to a victory, because Domitius, he supposed, must very soon depart. He therefore dug two ditches, four feet deep, at a moderate distance from each other, on that side where lay the easiest access to the town and our forces might, most advantageously, attack him; resolving not to advance beyond them. Between these, he constantly drew up his army, placing all his cavalry upon the wings without them, which greatly exceeded ours in number, and would otherwise have been useless.

Chapter 39 Domitius, more concerned at Caesar's danger than his own, and believing he could not retire with safety, should he now desire the conditions he had rejected, or march away without any apparent cause, drew his forces out of the camp, and ranged them in order of battle. He placed the thirty-sixth legion on the right, that of Pontus on the left, and those of Deiotarus in the main body; drawing them up with a very narrow front, and posting the rest of the cohorts to sustain the wings. The armies being thus drawn up on each side, they advanced to the battle.

Chapter 40 The signal being given at the same time by both parties, they engage. The conflict was sharp and various, for the thirty-sixth legion falling upon the king's cavalry, that was drawn up without the ditch, charged them so successfully, that they drove them to the very walls of the town, passed the ditch, and attacked their infantry in the rear. But on the other side, the legion of Pontus having given way, the second line, which advanced to sustain them, making a circuit round the ditch, in order to attack the enemy in flank, was overwhelmed and borne down by a shower of darts, in endeavoring to pass it. The legions of Deiotarus made scarcely any resistance; thus the victorious forces of the king turned their right wing and main body against the thirty-sixth legion, which yet made a brave stand; and though surrounded by the forces of the enemy, formed themselves into a circle, with wonderful presence of mind, and retired to the foot of a mountain, whither Pharnaces did not think fit to pursue them, on account of the disadvantage of the place. Thus the legion of Pontus being almost wholly cut off, with great part of those of Deiotarus, the thirty-sixth legion retreated to an eminence, with the loss of about two hundred and fifty men. Several Roman knights, of illustrious rank, fell in this battle. Domitius, after this defeat, rallied the remains of his broken army, and retreated, by safe ways, through Cappadocia, into Asia.

Chapter 41 Pharnaces, elated with this success, as he expected that Caesar's difficulties would terminate as he **Pharnaces** wished, entered Pontus with all his forces. There, acting as conqueror and a most cruel king, and promising himself a happier destiny than his father, he stormed many towns, and seized the effects of the Roman and Pontic citizens, inflicted punishments, worse than death, upon such as were distinguished by their age or beauty, and having made himself master of all Pontus, as there was no one to oppose his progress, boasted that he had recovered his father's kingdom.

Terrain Setup:

Walls of Nicopolis (use Rampart tiles facing is unimportant see special terrain rules): I 5 through to I10 (inclusive)

Ditch Hexes (use River tiles see special terrain rules): F5, F6, F7, F8, F9

Hill Hexes: C11, C13, B9 through B12, A9 through A13 (all-inclusive)

Broken Terrain Hexes: B8, A2

Initial Army Setup:

Roman Army:

x3 Elite Heavy Infantry (5 blocks see Special Legionary rules): D9, D10, C10

x5 Medium Infantry (3 blocks only for each see Special Rules): D6, D7, D8, C7, C8

X2 Heavy Infantry (4 Blocks see Special Legionary rules) : D4, D5

X2 Medium Cavalry (2 Blocks only for each see Special Rules): D3, D11

x1 Auxillia (4 Blocks): C4

X1 Light Archer (4 Blocks): C11

X1 Leader (Domitius Calvinus): D9

Pontic Army: (The Pontic Army is an Asiatic Style Force—See Special Rules)

x4 Auxillia (Pontic Levy see Special Rules): H2, I6, I9, H7

x9 Medium Infantry: G5, G6, G7, H8, G9, G10 H4, H6, H9,

x2 Light Archer: I10, G4

x3 Light Infantry: F7, I5, G12

x3 Medium Cavalry: F12, G2, H1

x2 Heavy Cavalry (Cataphracts see Special Rules): G3, G11

x2 Leaders : G3 (Pontic General) H6 (Pharnaces)

War Council:

Roman Army

Leader: Domitius Calvinus

5 Command Cards (one card is a Line Command, the rest random picks)

Move First

Pontic Army

Leader: Pharnaces

5 Command Cards

Victory

Roman Player: 11 Banners

Pontic Player: 6 Banners, but the first Roman Cavalry unit eliminated doesn't count towards Banners for the Pontic Player.

Special Scenario Rules:

Command Rules:

Pontic Leaders may cancel a retreat **or** a sword hit if present with the unit.

Units on both sides involved in close combat with the support of a Leader may only count one helmet hit amongst those rolled to inflict a hit on an opposing unit.

Units and the Rally Card: No unit can be rallied to beyond five blocks or its strength at the start of the game whichever is less. If a Player rolls "swords" when attempting to rally he may freely chose which unit gets a block back.

The "Marian" Command Card Deck

Historical Note: Combat in the 1st Century BC between Roman Legions and semi-Hellenic kingdoms like Pontus, was somewhat different than the wars between civilized states in the 3rd Century BC. There was less room for combined arms tactics and maneuver, and battles probably tended to be more of the nature of hand-to-hand full bore slugfests. Also Pharnaces' army did use some copied Roman methods of command and organization in battle for much of their foot troops.

This particular scenario utilizes a different Command Card Deck than the original C & C Ancients Deck. Eight (8) Cards are removed from the original deck leaving 52 Cards for scenario play. This new deck is called the "Marian Deck" and it is named after Caesar's uncle Gaius Marius who reorganized the Roman Legions in roughly 105-103BC (several years before Caesar was born) to meet the challenges of the Germanic Tribal invasions that threatened the Roman Republic of the time.

The following eight cards are removed before play and put aside to create the Marian Deck:

X4 "Order Light troops", x1 "I Am Spartacus", x2 "Move-Fire-Move", x1 "Mounted Charge"---note that one Mounted Charge" card is still retained in the deck.

Roman Legionary Infantry & other Special Roman Army Rules:

The following type of infantry unit in the game the Roman side is assumed to be Roman or Roman-Trained Legionaries: ALL Roman Heavy & Medium Infantry.

Roman Pilum:

Each Roman Legionary Infantry unit starts with a Pilum Marker. The Pilum is a one-time use weapon, and is generally fired right before a Roman Legionary unit attacks in close-combat or is itself attacked by the enemy in close-combat. Once the Pilum is fired the Pilum marker is removed from the Roman unit to indicate that the Pilum has been expended and the unit may not throw Pilum for the rest of the battle.

Just before a Roman unit with Pilum is attacked or is itself attacked by the enemy for the very first time in the battle in close-combat it throws its Pilum—roll one die and apply

normal hits for swords, color, or a Flag/retreat hit Afterwards remove the Pilum marker. The act of throwing the Pilum **is not** considered to be part of the Close-Combat—so any result of the Pilum throw is resolved before the Close-combat. An attached Pontic Leader may use his special ability to cancel a “swords” hit that was inflicted via a Pilum hit (see special Command rules) on the unit he is stacked with.

Roman units, adjacent to the enemy, that have not expended their Pilum may also be ordered to throw Pilum if the card “Darken the Sky” is played by their commanding player. The Player picks one adjacent enemy unit and throws two dice—apply the results just as one would before close combat—and remove the Pilum Marker.

Roman Relief Moves & Cohort Maneuvers:

Adjacent and on the same side Roman Legionary Infantry, instead of moving, may switch places in a “Relief/Cohort Maneuver”. Relief/Cohort Maneuvers may only be conducted through the play of Section cards ONLY. Instead of ordering one unit via a section card, the controlling Player may order a pair of adjacent Legionary Infantry units to switch hexes—at least one of the units switching places must not be adjacent to an enemy unit. A unit that switched places via the Relief/Cohort Maneuver into a hex adjacent to the enemy may close combat in the same player-turn.

Deiotarus’ Native Legions: The initial 3 block each Medium Infantry Legionary units represent the two native legions of King Deiotarus that he loaned to Calvinus for the campaign. These units do not automatically make a hit when they roll: the appropriate color of the unit they are targeting, swords, or Flags in close-combat or battle-back—re-roll any color, sword, or Flag hits inflicted by these units in the initial roll to determine the real result and go with the outcome of the second roll. This rule does not affect pilum fire by these units, which is conducted normally.

Roman Cavalry: The Roman Medium Cavalry units in the game represent very small bodies (a few hundred men at the very maximum) of locally raised mounted men. Therefore these units only have a maximum strength of two blocks and never inflict a hit in close combat or battle-back if swords are rolled for the unit(s).

Outflanking---*This is an easy way of introducing facing and flanks to the game with little fuss—it can be retrofitted to other scenarios where appropriate:*

A unit is said to be “Outflanked” if it is surrounded **in all** six adjacent hexes by either enemy units, or hexes adjacent to an enemy unit. The presence of friendly units or impassable terrain does not negate an “Outflanked” situation **in any way**. Units on the board edges (and not surrounded by six adjacent hexes) **cannot** be “Outflanked”. Effects of being Outflanked: “Outflanked” units when battling back roll only half the normal number of dice they would be normally entitled to rounded up—to a maximum of only two dice—“Outflanked” units when battling back **never** hit on helmet rolls even if supported by a leader. A unit’s “Outflanked” situation is judged at the instant it battles back.

The Pontic-Asiatic Army Special Rules:

Asiatic Army: The Pontic Army is assumed to be a typical Asiatic ‘horde’, greatly outnumbering, but inferior in both equipment and fighting spirit to the forces of the Roman Republic’s Legions---In Close Combat and Battle Back ALL Pontic units make **no hits** on their enemies if Swords are rolled—**always** consider Swords to be a ‘miss’ when rolled by the Pontic Player.

Pontic Asiatic Levy: All Pontic Auxillia units are assumed to be the standard Asia Minor Infantry Levy of the Pontic kingdom—these units have no missile capability. Their normal retreat distance is two hexes instead of 1 hex. For all other purposes Pontic Auxilla are treated as regular Auxilla units.

Pontic Cataphracti: Pontic Heavy Cavalry is heavily armored—therefore they always ignore the first sword hit inflicted upon them in close-combat or battle-back.

Terrain Special Rules:

Walls of Nicopolis: **Only** Pontic units can enter these Rampart hexes—Pontic units located in these hexes **may never** be attacked by close-combat or missile fire—if Pontic units close-combat out of these hexes they do so at one dice less than normal, and receive **no benefit** from the Rampart hex save the cancellation of one Flag result. Pontic missile-capable units located in these hexes may missile fire into adjacent hexes containing Roman units as an exception to the normal rules.

Ditch Hexes: Units in ditch hexes when engaged in close combat attack and battle-back at one dice less than normal unless the unit they are engaged with is also in a ditch hex. The ditch hexes do not inhibit movement, save that it costs a cavalry unit 2 MP rather than 1 MP to move from a ditch to a non-ditch hex. Units located in Ditch hexes may never evade.