

Martin Hoefler
(hoover2701)



Subject: Cannae 216BC: A good introductory scenario? Yes!

On Monday evening I met with my old friend Marco to introduce him to the world of ancient warfare with C&C: Ancients. I must mention that Marco is no boardgamer. He rather is a specialist in the world's best console soccer sim "Pro Evolution Soccer" which we frequently play against each other. For a change of pace I suggested we should play a session of C&C: Ancients. In our childhood we both were avid RISK-fans and after having described C&C to him on the phone he was eager to give it a go.

Of course I had to explain the rules prior to the game. This took quite a while as even the movement via hexes was new to him. I have never played Battlecry with him (which I should have done) and so the first hour went into rules, rules, rules.

When Marco finally was content with my explanations we selected a scenario. I suggested Akragas as there aren't too many units on the board and no terrain tiles. Marco wanted to have a real Roman-Carthaginian fight though and so we finally agreed on the battle of Cannae. I chose to play the Romans and then we started.

Cannae 216BC:



My overall plan was to advance my troops in the center but keeping an eye for my flanks in order not to be outflanked and hit in the back as it happened in reality. On the first turns though I had terrible cards so all I could do was to position my troops as good as possible and hope for the right cards. Soon my hand of cards improved and I was able to advance my light, medium and heavy infantry in the center. Marco meanwhile positioned his troops very defensively with one exception: Using the flexibility and high range of his light cavalry on the Carthaginian right flank he managed to score the first victory point of the evening. My medium cavalry had no chance against Maharbal's formidable forces.

I told Marco that he should consider to play more aggressively as battles near the end of his part of the board could easily result in retreats he could not fulfill and thereby in losses of troops. He didn't care though and was content with his tactics.

Finally my troops entered close combat in the center. Atilius and his heavy infantry scored two points in one combat round by annihilating a Carthaginian warrior unit, momentum advancing and then finishing off the slingers whose evade path was blocked. In the same turn Paillus' medium infantry threw a heavy blow to a unit of Carthage's light cavalry forcing them off the board. It was now 3-1 to the Romans. I have to admit I was very lucky with dice throws in this round.

Marco was upset as he hadn't fully realized the strength of leaders in close combat. He promised revenge and wanted Atilius head to be delivered to Hannibal by all means. Two

heavy infantry units attacked Atilius' heavies in the next turn and killed all of them. Luckily, Atilius was able to evade.

The next few turns all brought battles in the center as I had planned beforehand. The Carthaginians did not manage to bring their superior forces on the flanks into battle. Atilius who had meanwhile joined the other heavy infantry unit managed to destroy another Carthaginian unit and was the star of the evening. Although his accompanying heavies were again destroyed the Roman leader managed to evade Carthaginian wrath a second time. After having beaten another light cavalry unit and one unit of auxiliaries the standing was now 6-3 for the Romans. Until this moment the Carthaginian left flank including Hannibal's heavy infantry and Hasdrubal's heavy cavalry had not once taken part in any battle on the field.

After two more turns the Romans had reached the official victory conditions by scoring the seventh victory point. The standing was 7-4. As we still had some time left before I had to head home we decided to go on with the scenario. It soon became apparent that Marco's defensive tactics in the beginning of the session now finally paid off. Maharbal, who had joined a heavy infantry unit, singlehandedly killed two units of Roman medium infantry in one turn splitting the Roman forces (or what was left of them) in two halves.

When I finally had to leave the standing was 9-9 and the Carthaginians had a slight advantage in remaining hitting power. They still had two heavy infantry units and their heavy cavalry while the remainder of the Roman forces consisted mainly of auxilia and two medium infantry units. None of us had lost a leader. We shook hands and declared a truce promising to meet again - maybe on the fields of Zama on another day. "I want elephants!", Marco said.

It was a great evening with lots of laughs and tense moments. The beginning was a slow one due to all the rule explanations but as the game progressed Marco became more and more involved into the game's mechanics and had the Romans on the verge of defeat by the end of the game. He was absolutely thrilled by this gaming experience and now wants to play again as soon as possible.

Lessons learned:

1. Non-gamers can understand and play C&C in one evening and have fun
2. Leaders add great personality to the game (Roleplaying them is cool)
3. One can prevent the other player from applying his tactics by forcing him to react to yours (maybe a little luck and an inexperienced opponent make this an easier task)
4. Playing a scenario to the end can be a satisfying experience (Last Man Standing)
5. Cannae is a great introductory scenario
6. Light cavalry massed up is a dangerous threat
7. Use warrior units for attacking, not for defending (heard me, Marco?)
8. There are no bad cards, only bad ways of playing a card 😊

Thanks for reading!

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