

Caesar Against The Nervii: The Battle of the Sabis 57 BC

Scenario Note: This particular scenario probably requires the use of at least two C & C sets, however folks with access to miniatures can probably improvise something.

Historical Background: (A Selection from Caesar's own "Gallic Wars" Book 2)

"Caesar, having sent his cavalry on before, followed close after them with all his forces; but the plan and order of the march was different from that which the Belgae had reported to the Nervii. For as he was approaching the enemy, Caesar, according to his custom, led on [as the van six legions unencumbered by baggage; behind them he had placed the baggage-trains of the whole army; then the two legions which had been last raised closed the rear, and were a guard for the baggage-train. Our horse, with the slingers and archers, having passed the river, commenced action with the cavalry of the enemy. While they from time to time betook themselves into the woods to their companions, and again made an assault out of the wood upon our men, who did not dare to follow them in their retreat further than the limit to which the plain and open parts extended, in the mean time the six legions which had arrived first, having measured out the work, began to fortify the camp. When the first part of the baggage train of our army was seen by those who lay hid in the woods, which had been agreed on among them as the time for commencing action, as soon as they had arranged their line of battle and formed their ranks within the woods, and had encouraged one another, they rushed out suddenly with all their forces and made an attack upon our horse. The latter being easily routed and thrown into confusion, the Nervii ran down to the river with such incredible speed that they seemed to be in the woods, the river, and close upon us almost at the same time. And with the same speed they hastened up the hill to our camp, and to those who were employed in the works. "

"Caesar had every thing to do at one time: the standard to be displayed, which was the sign when it was necessary to run to arms; the signal to be given by the trumpet; the soldiers to be called off from the works; those who had proceeded some distance for the purpose of seeking materials for the rampart, to be summoned; the order of battle to be formed; the soldiers to be encouraged; the watchword to be given. A great part of these arrangements was prevented by the shortness of time and the sudden approach and charge of the enemy. Under these difficulties two things proved of advantage; [first] the skill and experience of the soldiers, because, having been trained by former engagements, they could suggest to themselves what ought to be done, as conveniently as receive information from others; and [secondly] that Caesar had forbidden his several lieutenants to depart from the works and their respective legions, before the camp was fortified. These, on account of the near approach and the speed of the enemy, did not then wait for any command from Caesar, but of themselves executed whatever appeared proper. "

" Caesar, having given the necessary orders, hastened to and fro into whatever quarter fortune carried him, to animate the troops, and came to the tenth legion. Having encouraged the soldiers with no further speech than that "they should keep up the remembrance of their wonted valor, and not be confused in mind, but valiantly sustain the assault of the enemy ;" as the latter were not further from them than the distance to which a dart could be cast, he gave the signal for commencing battle. And having gone to another quarter for the purpose of encouraging [the soldiers], he finds them fighting. Such was the shortness of the time, and so determined was the mind of the enemy on fighting, that time was wanting not only for affixing

the military insignia, but even for putting on the helmets and drawing off the covers from the shields. To whatever part any one by chance came from the works (in which he had been employed), and whatever standards he saw first, at these he stood, lest in seeking his own company he should lose the time for fighting. “

“The army having been marshaled, rather as the nature of the ground and the declivity of the hill and the exigency of the time, than as the method and order of military matters required; while the legions in the different places were withstanding the enemy, some in one quarter, some in another, and the view was obstructed by the very thick hedges intervening, as we have before remarked, neither could proper reserves be posted, nor could the necessary measures be taken in each part, nor could all the commands be issued by one person. Therefore, in such an unfavorable state of affairs, various events of fortune followed.”

“The soldiers of the ninth and tenth legions, as they had been stationed on the left part of the army, casting their weapons, speedily drove the Atrebates (for that division had been opposed to them,) who were breathless with running and fatigue, and worn out with wounds, from the higher ground into the river; and following them as they were endeavoring to pass it, slew with their swords a great part of them while impeded (therein). They themselves did not hesitate to pass the river; and having advanced to a disadvantageous place, when the battle was renewed, they [nevertheless] again put to flight the enemy, who had returned and were opposing them. In like manner, in another quarter two different legions, the eleventh and the eighth, having routed the Veromandui, with whom they had engaged, were fighting from the higher ground upon the very banks of the river. But, almost the whole camp on the front and on the left side being then exposed, since the twelfth legion was posted in the right wing, and the seventh at no great distance from it, all the Nervii, in a very close body, with Boduognatus, who held the chief command, as their leader, hastened toward that place; and part of them began to surround the legions on their unprotected flank, part to make for the highest point of the encampment. “

“ At the same time our horsemen, and light-armed infantry, who had been with those, who, as I have related, were routed by the first assault of the enemy, as they were betaking themselves into the camp, met the enemy face to face, and again sought flight into another quarter; and the camp-followers who from the Decuman Gate, and from the highest ridge of the hill had seen our men pass the river as victors, when, after going out for the purposes of plundering, they looked back and saw the enemy parading in our camp, committed themselves precipitately to flight; at the same time there arose the cry and shout of those who came with the baggage-train: and they (affrighted), were carried some one way, some another. By all these circumstances the cavalry of the Treviri were much alarmed, (whose reputation for courage is extraordinary among the Gauls, and who had come to Caesar, being sent by their state as auxiliaries), and, when they saw our camp filled with a large number of the enemy, the legions hard pressed and almost held surrounded, the camp-retainers, horsemen, slingers, and Numidians fleeing on all sides divided and scattered, they, despairing of our affairs, hastened home, and related to their state that the Romans were routed and conquered, [and] that the enemy were in possession of their camp and baggage-train.”

“Caesar proceeded, after encouraging the tenth legion, to the right wing; where he perceived that his men were hard pressed, and that in consequence of the standards of the twelfth legion being collected together in one place, the crowded soldiers were a hinderance to themselves in the fight; that all the centurions of the fourth cohort were slain, and the standard-bearer killed,

the standard itself lost, almost all the centurions of the other cohorts either wounded or slain, and among them the chief centurion of the legion P. Sextius Baculus, a very valiant man, who was so exhausted by many and severe wounds, that he was already unable to support himself; he likewise perceived that the rest were slackening their efforts, and that some, deserted by those in the rear, were retiring from the battle and avoiding the weapons; that the enemy [on the other hand] though advancing from the lower ground, were not relaxing in front, and were [at the same time] pressing hard on both flanks; he also perceived that the affair was at a crisis, and that there was not any reserve which could be brought up, having therefore snatched a shield from one of the soldiers in the rear (for he himself had come without a shield), he advanced to the front of the line, and addressing the centurions by name, and encouraging the rest of the soldiers, he ordered them to carry forward the standards, and extend the companies, that they might the more easily use their swords. On his arrival, as hope was brought to the soldiers and their courage restored, while every one for his own part, in the sight of his general, desired to exert his utmost energy, the impetuosity of the enemy was a little checked. “

“Caesar, when he perceived that the seventh legion, which stood close by him, was also hard pressed by the enemy, directed the tribunes of the soldiers to effect a junction of the legions gradually, and make their charge upon the enemy with a double front; which having been done, since they brought assistance the one to the other, nor feared lest their rear should be surrounded by the enemy, they began to stand their ground more boldly, and to fight more courageously. In the mean time, the soldiers of the two legions which had been in the rear of the army, as a guard for the baggage-train, upon the battle being reported to them, quickened their pace, and were seen by the enemy on the top of the hill; and Titus Labienus, having gained possession of the camp of the enemy, and observed from the higher ground what was going on in our camp, sent the tenth legion as a relief to our men, who, when they had learned from the flight of the horse and the sutlers in what position the affair was, and in how great danger the camp and the legion and the commander were involved, left undone nothing [which tended] to dispatch. “

“ By their arrival, so great a change of matters was made, that our men, even those who had fallen down exhausted with wounds, leaned on their shields, and renewed the fight: then the camp-retainers, though unarmed, seeing the enemy completely dismayed, attacked [them though] armed; the horsemen too, that they might by their valor blot the disgrace of their flight, thrust themselves before the legionary soldiers in all parts of the battle. But the enemy, even in the last hope of safety, displayed such great courage, that when the foremost of them had fallen, the next stood upon them prostrate, and fought from their bodies; when these were overthrown, and their corpses heaped up together, those who survived cast their weapons against our men [thence], as from a mound, and returned our darts which had fallen short between [the armies]; so that it ought not to be concluded, that men of such great courage had injudiciously dared to pass a very broad river, ascend very high banks, and come up to a very disadvantageous place; since their greatness of spirit had rendered these actions easy, although in themselves very difficult. “

“This battle being ended, and the nation and name of the Nervii being almost reduced to annihilation, their old men, whom together with the boys and women we have stated to have been collected together in the fenny places and marshes, on this battle having been reported to them, since they were convinced that nothing was an obstacle to the conquerors, and nothing

safe to the conquered, sent ambassadors to Caesar by the consent of all who remained, and surrendered themselves to him; and in recounting the calamity of their state, said that their senators were reduced from 600 to three; that from 60,000 men they [were reduced] to scarcely 500 who could bear arms; whom Caesar, that he might appear to use compassion toward the wretched and the suppliant, most carefully spared; and ordered them to enjoy their own territories and towns, and commanded their neighbors that they should restrain themselves and their dependents from offering injury or outrage [to them].”

Terrain Tile Set-up:

Sabis River x15 River tiles (all fordable): E1, F1, G2, G3, G4, G5, H5, H6, H7, H8, H9, G10, F10, F11, F12

X9 Hill Tiles: B2, E6, C12, I5, H11, H12, D9, D2, D4

X9 Forest Tiles: H1, H2, H3, H4, I7, I9, H10, G11, G12

X2 Gallic Camp Tiles: I2, I3

X4 Roman Camp Tiles: C7, C8, D7, D8

(None) of the camp hexes are considered to be fortified, camps still **do** block line of sight, but have no other effects in combat in this scenario. If the Gallic units enter Roman Camp hexes or Roman units enter Gallic Camp hexes the Camp tile is removed from the map and the hex reverts to clear terrain)

Optional Hexside Terrain: See the bottom of this scenario sheet—the Players may agree to add a new terrain type—Hedges –which run on hex-sides—Caesar states in his account of the battle that the area where the main battle was fought was much cut up and divided by large hedges which made movement and communication between parts of the army difficult.

Initial Set-up and Army Strengths:

Roman Army: (note that Roman units have somewhat modified initial block strengths)

9th & 10th Legions x4 Heavy Infantry as follows

x2 Heavy Infantry (6 blocks each) E4, C5

x2 Heavy Infantry (5 blocks each) D2, C3

12th & 7th Legions x4 Medium Infantry as follows

x4 Medium Infantry (5 blocks each) E6, F7, D7, E9

11th & 8th Legions x3 Medium Infantry & x1 Heavy Infantry

x3 Medium Infantry (5 blocks each) C10, B10, C12

x1 Heavy Infantry (5 blocks) D10

13th & 14th Legions x4 Medium Infantry as follows

x4 Medium Infantry (4 blocks each) A5, A6, A8, A8

(these are recruit legions bringing up the rear with the baggage train see special rules on these just arriving units)

Roman auxiliaries & mercenaries setup as follows

X1 Medium Cavalry (2 Blocks) A3

X1 Light Slings (3 Blocks) B4

X1 Light Archers (3 Blocks) B7
X1 Light Cavalry (2 Blocks) A10

(The Roman auxiliaries & mercenaries start the main battle broken and/or panicked by the initial mass Gallic onslaught—they had been skirmishing over the river with the Gauls before being swept away by the sudden enemy attack that caught Caesar and his Legions by surprise—see special rules for these broken and panicked Roman lackeys)

Roman Leaders: x2 Leaders setup as follows: Caesar D7 Labienus C5

Nervii/Gallic-Allied Army:

X9 Warrior units: F1, G2, G3, G4, G5, H5, H6, F11, F12
X5 Elite Warrior units: H7, H8, H9, G10, G11 (use Medium Infantry see special rules)
X1 Noble Warrior unit (5 Blocks): F10 (use Medium Infantry Blocks see special rules)
X1 Medium Cavalry: G1
X1 Light Infantry: I3
X2 Leaders G3 (Atrebate Chief) G10 (Boduognatus the Nervii Chief)

War Council:

Roman Army:

Leader: Caesar
5 Command Cards (chosen randomly)

Nervii/Gallic Allied Army

Leader: Nervii Chief

4 Command Cards

Move First (Gallic/Nervii Player gets to Move twice before Romans Move—than alternate normally—Gallic units that are ordered by the first Nervii card played cannot be ordered by the second Nervii card played—Gallic units that enter hexes via movement that are adjacent to Roman units during the first two Nervii player-turns must cease movement in that hex.

Banners & Victory

The Romans receive one banner for each Gallic unit and Leader eliminated and one Banner for each Gallic Camp hex removed from the map via Roman entry. The Gauls receive one banner for each Roman legionary (Medium or Heavy Infantry unit) and leader eliminated and half a banner for eliminating any other Roman unit. They also receive two banners in lieu of one if they manage to eliminate Caesar and two banners if they remove at least three of the four Roman Camp tiles via the entry of Gallic units. Victory for the Roman side is: 12 Banners—for the Gallic side 11 Banners.

The “Marian” Command Card Deck

Historical Note: *Combat in the 1st Century BC along the Roman frontier 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 with the stakes being nothing less than the survival of the tribe or Legion.

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.

Leader Command, Caesar, & Rally Special Rules:

Caesar can cancel **both** a retreat **and** a sword hit if present with the unit receiving such hits.

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, unless Caesar is the supporting leader---than up to two helmet hits may be counted

Caesar when moving & ordered by himself without an attached unit normally may move up to four hexes instead of the regular three hexes for Leaders in the rulebook.

Roman and Gallic units and the Rally Card: No Gallic unit can be rallied to beyond four blocks or its strength at the start of the game whichever is less. No Roman 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.

Gallic Special Rules & Units:

Gallic Elite Warriors: All Gallic medium infantry units are treated as Warriors for all purposes, they are Elite Warriors—in addition they receive one extra dice the very first time in the scenario they battle back or engage in close combat as long as the unit still has three or more blocks at the instant it rolls in either combat or battle-back.

Gallic Noble Warriors: The sole Gallic Noble Warrior unit (represented by Medium Infantry) is considered to be made up of the top cream of Nervii tribal warrior society. It starts the game with five blocks and receives the same one dice- one time bonus as the Elite Warriors—in addition if still at four or more blocks it also receives the same benefits as a regular warrior unit (ignoring one flag and getting four dice normally).

Gallic Line Commands: The maximum number of units the Gallic player may move/order with a Line Command Card is five units.

“Barbarian Rush”: Limits to Gallic Momentum Combat: Gallic Warrior units, regardless of type, reduced to one or two blocks **May Not Engage** in momentum combat unless a friendly leader is attached to the unit in question.

Gallic Tribes: The Gallic Leader that starts in hex G3 (the Atrebate Chief) may never end a move or evasion in a hex containing a Gallic Noble or Elite Warrior unit. The Gallic Leader that starts in hex G10 (Boduognatus the Nervii Chief) may never end a move or evasion in a hex containing a Gallic Warrior unit that **is not** also an Elite or Noble one.

“Barbarian Balk”: If a Gallic Warrior unit (of whatever type) moves 2 hexes (or 3 hexes using “Double Time”) to a hex adjacent to a Roman unit(s) to close combat it and then is unable to do so due to the Roman unit(s) being retreated or eliminated by other Gallic attacks, the Gallic unit has failed its requirement to close-combat attack given the length of its pre-combat move. Such units that fail to attack are said to have “balked”—immediately retreat Warrior units in such a situation one hex once all Gallic close combats are finished. The one hex “Barbarian Balk” retreat is conducted in the normal fashion just as if the unit was forced to retreat one hex after a battle—and it is not optional and cannot be canceled in any way—even by the presence of a leader.

Roman Special Rules & Units:

Roman Pilum:

Each Roman Heavy & Medium Infantry unit starts with a Pilum Marker. The Pilum is a one-time use weapon that is generally fired right before a Roman unit attacks in close-combat or is itself attacked by the enemy in close-combat. Once the pilum is fired (or lost see below) –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 the color, swords, 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 and may affect the the number of dice available in the upcoming close combat.

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 Roman 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 units which are close-combat attacked by Gallic units during the first two Gallic Player turns throw one dice to determine whether they can fire pilum normally. On a roll of “4-6” they do so—on a roll of “1-3” their pilum is “lost” (the Romans were surprised and had no time to deliver a pilum volley effectively or at all) and the marker is removed without any pilum fire taking place.

Roman Relief Moves & Cohort Maneuvers:

Adjacent Roman Heavy and Medium 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 Roman Player may

order a pair of adjacent Heavy/ Medium 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.

Roman Elite Veteran Initiative:

Roman Heavy Infantry units that are ordered by Line Commands or an “Order Heavy Troops” card may move two hexes regardless of terrain (and close combat if they wish on an adjacent unit at +1 normal dice also regardless of terrain entered, but still use “normal” terrain combat close-combat effects as the dice baseline to calculate the number of dice used).

Roman Recruit Units:

The four Roman Medium Infantry units that start with four blocks each in Hex Row “A” are considered to be the newly recruited Legions that Caesar had placed at the back of his column. They were still marching to the battleground when the Gallic attack kicked off. When battling back these units “normally” only throw 3 dice. These units may not be ordered by the Roman Player (or attacked by the Gallic Player in any way) until two complete Roman Player-turns have been executed.

Roman Auxiliaries & Mercenaries:

All the Roman units other than the Heavy/Medium Infantry are Caesar’s non-Roman citizen auxiliaries and mercenaries who were badly handled by the Gauls over the river just as the Nervii attack started out. These troops headed for the rear panicked, but some later rallied back and even helped evict the Nervii from the camp-site that Caesar’s troops were erecting that afternoon. The units (represented by the four light foot and cavalry units) may not be ordered by the Roman Player until two complete Roman Player-turns have been executed---they may evade normally or stand and fight if the Gallic Player attacks them at the Roman Player’s option.

Optional Rule: New Terrain Type--Hedges

Add x10 Hedge hexside markers (I used some plastic model bushes that fit perfectly & look great from some Lego-type set)

Set-up each pair listed below denotes a hexside to place a Hedge marker on:

C3/D3 E3/E4 E4/E5 F6/F7 E8/E9 E9/E10

C11/E12 D10/D11 C10/C11 F7/F8

Effect of Hedge Hexsides on Movement: It takes a unit’s entire ordered move to move through a hedge hexside—the unit must start its move on the other side of the hedge hexside it passes through. Units that just passed through a hedge hexside in the same player-turn may not normally attack in close-combat or by missile fire. A Roman “Relief/Cohort Maneuver” **may not** take place between two adjacent units separated by a hedge hexside. Leaders, moving on their own without being attached to a friendly unit ignore the effects of hedge hexsides and may pass through them as if they do not exist

Effect of Hedge Hexsides on Command: Friendly Units in a “block” or “blob” of units for Command purposes and being ordered by the cards are NOT considered to be adjacent to each other for Card Command purposes if the units in question are separated by a hedge hexside. They also are NOT considered adjacent to each other for Leader Command influence in combat.

Effect of Hedge Hexsides on combat: The “Normal” dice when attacking or battling back through a Hedge—the normal dice is 2 dice either way—of course that can be increased depending on the card or rule used to bring on the battle. Hedges also block lines of sight for missile fire--, but Roman Pilum fire through hedges is conducted normally. Units that are adjacent to each other through a hedge hexside may still offer support to each other.