

## **“Veni, Vidi, Vici”: The Battle of Zela 47 BC**

**Historical Notes:** *While Caesar was in Alexandria in 48 BC meeting Cleopatra and battling local Egyptian and mercenary supporters of the Egyptian court—King Pharnaces of Colchis went on campaign to recover his father’s (Mithridates) old core kingdom of Pontus located in the northern part of modern day Asia Minor. One of Caesar’s lieutenants in Asia, Domitius Calvinus, was defeated by the King at the Battle of Nicopolis, and Pharnaces seized control of Pontus despoiling parts of that land. Once Caesar finished his Alexandrian War and his Nile dalliance with Cleopatra, he hurried on to the nearby Roman provinces in Asia with a small force including the veteran 6<sup>th</sup> Legion and picked up the remains of Calvinus’ army for a quick confrontation with the upstart King Pharnaces.*

### **Historical Background to “Veni, Vidi, Vici”(from the Latin: “I came, I saw, I conquered”)**

*The following account of the battle of Zela, which took place on 2 August 47, was written by an anonymous officer, maybe a man named Hirtius, one of Caesar's lieutenants. Sections 65-77 of the Alexandrine War was translated by W. A. McDevitte and W. S. Bohn.*

“When Caesar arrived in Syria, from Egypt [where he had spent the winter with [Cleopatra](#)], and learned that the government at Rome was badly and injudiciously conducted [...], thought it was yet first incumbent upon him to settle the state of the provinces through which he passed [...]. This he hoped soon to effect in Syria, [Cilicia](#), and Asia, because these provinces were not involved in war. In Bithynia and Pontus indeed he expected more trouble, because he understood Pharnaces [the son of Rome's archenemy [Mithridates VI of Pontus](#)] still continued in the latter, and was not likely to quit it easily, being flushed with [an earlier] victory ...”

“After a stay of some days in these parts, he named Sextus Caesar, his friend and relation, to the command of Syria and the legions appointed to guard it; and sailed himself for Cilicia, with the fleet he had brought from Egypt. [...] Advancing through Cappadocia [...], he stopped two days at Mazaca and arrived at Comana. [...] Upon his approaching Pontus, and the frontiers of Galatia, Deiotarus, ruler of that province [...], came in a suppliant manner to Caesar, to beg forgiveness for assisting Pompey with his army [during the [battle of Pharsalus](#)] [...]. Caesar restored him and commanded him to join him with all his cavalry, and the legion he had trained up after the Roman manner.”

“Caesar arrived in Pontus and drew all his forces together, which were not very considerable, either for their number or discipline. The [sixth legion](#), which was composed of veterans that he had brought with him from [Alexandria](#), [had been] reduced to less than a thousand men. He also had the [legion of Deiotarus](#), and two more that had been in the [earlier] battle [...]. “

“Ambassadors arrived from Pharnaces, "to entreat that Caesar would not come as an enemy, for he would submit to all his commands." [...] Pharnaces promised every thing, but [tried] to elude his engagements. Caesar, perceiving his drift, did now, out of

necessity, what he was usually wont to do through inclination, and resolved to decide the affair as soon as possible by a battle. “

“Zela is a fortified town in Pontus [...]. All around is a great number of large mountains, intersected by valleys. The highest of these, which is celebrated for the victory of Mithridates, the defeat of Triarius, and the destruction of our army, is not above three miles from Zela, and has a ridge that almost extends to the town. Here Pharnaces encamped, with all his forces, repairing the fortifications of a position which had proved so fortunate to his father.”

“Caesar having encamped about five miles from the enemy, and observing that the valleys which defended the king's camp would likewise defend his own, at the same distance, if the enemy, who were much nearer, did not seize them before him, ordered a great quantity of fascines to be brought within the entrenchments. This was quickly performed and next night, at the fourth watch, leaving the baggage in the camp, he set out with the legions; and arriving at daybreak unsuspected by the enemy, possessed himself of the same post where Mithridates had defeated Triarius. Hither he commended all the fascines to be brought, employing the servants of the army for that purpose, that the soldiers might not be called off from the works [...].”

“Pharnaces perceived this, and next morning ranged all his troops in order of battle before his camp. Caesar, on account of the disadvantage of the ground, believed that the king was reviewing them according to military discipline, or with a view to retard his works, by keeping a great number of his men under arms, or through the confidence of the king, that he might not seem to defend his position by his fortifications rather than by force. Therefore, keeping only his first line in order of battle, Caesar commanded the rest of the army to go on with their works.”

“But Pharnaces, either prompted by the place itself, which had been so fortunate to his father; or induced by favorable omens, as we were afterward told, or discovering the small number of our men that were in arms (for he took all that were employed in carrying materials to the works to be soldiers), or confiding in his veteran army, who valued themselves upon having defeated the twenty-second legion [of Deiotarus]; and at the same time, despising our troops, whom he knew he had worsted [...], was determined upon a battle, and to that end began to cross the valley. Caesar, at first, laughed at his ostentation, in crowding his army into so narrow a place, where no enemy, in his right senses, would have ventured: while, in the mean time, Pharnaces continued his march, and began to ascend the steep hill on which Caesar was posted. “

“Caesar, astonished at his incredible rashness and confidence, and finding himself suddenly and unexpectedly attacked, called off his soldiers from the works, ordered them to arms, opposed the legions to the enemy, and ranged his troops in order of battle. The suddenness of the thing occasioned some terror at first. Our ranks were not yet formed, when the scythed chariots disordered and confused our soldiers. However, the multitude of darts discharged against them soon put a stop to their advance.”

“The enemy's army followed them close, and began the battle with a shout. Our advantageous situation, but especially the assistance of the gods, who preside over all the

events of war, and more particularly those where human conduct can be of no service, favored us greatly on this occasion. “

“After a sharp and obstinate conflict, victory began to declare for us on the right wing, where the sixth legion was posted. The enemy there were totally overthrown, but, in the center and left, the battle was long and doubtful; however, with the assistance of the gods, we at last prevailed there also, and drove them with the utmost precipitation down the hill which they had so easily ascended before. Great numbers were slain, and many were crushed by the flight of their own troops [...]. Our victorious men did not hesitate to advance up the disadvantageous ground and attack their fortifications, which they soon forced, notwithstanding the resistance made by the troops left by Pharnaces to guard it. Almost the whole army was cut to pieces or made prisoners. Pharnaces himself escaped, with a few horse; and had not the attack on the camp given him an opportunity of fleeing without pursuit, he must certainly have fallen alive into Caesar's hands. “

“Though Caesar was accustomed to victory, yet he felt incredible joy at the present success, because he had so speedily put an end to a very great war. The remembrance, too, of the danger to which he had been exposed, enhanced the pleasure, as he had obtained an easy victory in a very difficult conjuncture. Having thus recovered Pontus and abandoned the plunder of the enemy's camp to the soldiers, he set out next day with some light horse. He ordered the sixth legion to return to Italy to receive the honors and rewards they had merited; and sent home the auxiliary troops of Deiotarus, and left two legions with Caelius Vincianus to protect the kingdom of Pontus. “

Scenario Name Note: After the battle Caesar dashed off a letter to a friend in Rome expressing his satisfaction that events on the battlefield had concluded so favorably. He stated in the letter: “Veni, Vidi, Vici” to underline the swiftness of the result or “I came, I saw, I conquered”. This snappy Latin expression might have been used as a legend and thereby popularized on a picture diorama of the campaign at Caesar’s triumphal parade in Rome two years later.

**Terrain Setup: (see Special Terrain Rules, use extra sets or parts from Battle Cry)**

X7 Fordable River Tiles: A12, B11, C11, D10, E11, E12, E13

X4 Pontic Camp Hexes: I10, I11, H9, H10

X12 Broken Terrain Hextiles: C1, D1, D2, C12, E5, E8, F1, F3, F7, F9, F12, H12

X41 Hill Hexes: A1 to A5, A7, A9, A10, B1 to B9, C3 to C9, I1 to I9, H1 to H8  
(Use Woods hexes to represent Hill Hexes if necessary)

X2 Roman Rampart in Progress Hexes: A6 & A8

**Initial Army Setup:**

**Roman Army:**

X2 Elite Heavy Infantry (5 blocks see Special Legionary rules): C4, C5

x 2 Medium Infantry (4 blocks see Special rules): C6, C7

X2 Heavy Infantry (4 Blocks see Special Legionary rules): C8, C9

x1 Elite Heavy Infantry (6 Blocks 6<sup>th</sup> Legion Veterans see Special rules): C10

X2 Medium Cavalry (3 Blocks see Special Cavalry rules): B10, C3

x1 Auxillia (4 Blocks): B4

X1 Light Archer (4 Blocks): B9

x2 Leaders C9 (Caesar) C5 (Caelius Vincianus)

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

X3 Auxillia (Pontic Levy see Special Rules): G6, G8, H10

x8 Medium Infantry: F4, F5, E5, F6, F7, F9, E10, E6

x2 Light Archer: F8, F3

x3 Light Infantry: E2, F11, G5

x3 Medium Cavalry: E1, F12, G11

x2 Heavy Cavalry (Cataphracti see Special Rules): E3, F10

x1 Light Cavalry: F2

x3 Chariots:(See Special Rules) E7, E9, E5

x2 Leaders: F3 (Pontic General) G7 (Pharnaces)

### **War Council:**

#### Roman Army

Leader: Caesar

5 Command Cards (a Line Command Card, First Strike, Rally, Double Time, Counterattack, or Order Heavy Troops Cards ALL cannot be included in the initial Roman hand, pick new cards and reshuffle the draw deck and any discards if necessary)

#### Pontic Army

Leader: Pharnaces

4 Command Cards (randomly picked)

Move First, The Pontic Player moves twice, takes two full player-turns, before the Roman Player moves once, afterwards the two sides alternate normally.

### **Victory**

Roman Player: 12 Banners, but the first eliminated Chariot unit doesn't count. See Special Rules for additional ways for the Roman to score Banners.

Pontic Player: 6 Banners, but if Caesar is eliminated the Pontic scores two Banners. See Special Rules for additional ways for the Pontic Player to score Banners.

### **Special Scenario Rules:**

#### **Command Rules:**

The two 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, unless Caesar is the supporting leader---then 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.

*Units and the Rally Card:* No unit can be rallied to beyond six 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 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC between Roman Legions and semi-Hellenic kingdoms like Pontus, was somewhat different than the wars between civilized states in the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 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 6<sup>th</sup> Legion Veteran Initiative:

The single Roman Legionary unit that starts with 6 blocks represents the seriously under-strength, but veteran 6<sup>th</sup> Legion that Caesar inherited and took into his service from the Pompeians after Pompey's defeat at Pharsalus, and the ensuing mutiny among some of Caesar's old veterans who wished to return home.

As long as this unit has three blocks or more it may engage in Momentum Combat without a Leader after an advance. This unit is also +1 normal dice in close combat or battle-back regardless of terrain or position as long its at strength level 3 blocks or more at the instant of the roll.

Deiotarus' Native Legion: The initial 4 block each Medium Infantry Legionary units represent the native legion of King Deiotarus that he loaned to the Romans 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 Flags 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.

Caesar's Gallic and German Mercenary Cavalry: *Caesar's Cavalry was made up of hard-bitten mercenary fighters from the German and Gallic tribes. At this point in his career Caesar might have maintained a personal bodyguard of up to a thousand mounted & well-armed Germans.*

Roman Medium Cavalry units need only retreat two hexes per flag result inflicted or taken and are always at +1 normal dice in close combat or battle-back regardless of terrain or position as long its at strength level is at the full 3 blocks or more at the instant of the roll.

#### **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 Chariots: Pontic Chariots only retreat one hex per Flag result inflicted or taken.

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.

Pontic Attack Imperative: Pharnaces was very over-confident in the face of Caesar's rather small & seriously outnumbered army—The Pontic Player must launch or attempt at least one close-combat attack during each of his first three player turns—failure to do so scores one Banner each player-turn at least one attack is not accomplished by the Pontic Player. A Pontic Attack followed by a Roman evasion move **is not** considered an attempted attack for these purposes. Pontic units **may never** evade if attacked during the **first two** Roman Player-turns

**Terrain Special Rules:**

Pontic Camp hexes: Treat these as Hill hexes for all purposes. When entered by Roman units flip them over to a Hill Hex and the Roman Player scores one Banner for each such hex entered by his forces in the course of the game upon first entry only

Roman Rampart in Progress Hexes: Treat these as Hill hexes for all purposes. When entered by a Pontic units replace as a Hill Hex and the Pontic Player scores one Banner for each such hex entered by his forces in the course of the game upon first entry only.

Caesar was trying to move his camp to these general locations.

Uphill Missile Fire : Missile Fire (other than pilum throws) going uphill from a non-hill to a hill hex is always one dice only and may only be executed by a unit that did not move in the player-turn just before it fired.