

The history of game boxes for *Ancients* shows that it received a new look with each reprinting.

ANCIENTS

Tactical Battles in the Age Before Gunpowder

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1. Introduction

Ancients is a game of tactical combat in the age before gunpowder. In each battle, both players will line up their armies (of between twelve and eighteen pieces) and, through simple movement and combat mechanics, strive to 1) capture their enemy’s camp, 2) cause the enemy army to panic, and 3) have a decisive majority of force on the battlefield at the day’s end (i.e., at the end of the sixth Game Turn).

Ancients uses a fairly simple game system that includes components allowing two players to simulate virtually any large, pre-gunpowder era battle. Designed by **Bill Banks**, *Ancients* has been reprinted time and again and a full, print-and-play version with plenty of great supporting material can be downloaded for free at [<http://www.relative-range.com/ancients/>].

1.1 The classroom battles

In this class, you will play / refight at least one of these four historical ancient battles:

- **Hydaspes (326 BC):** Alexander (the Great) of Macedonia’s last great battle vs. Porus, King of India
- **Raphia (271 BC):** Alexander’s successors divided his empire and this is a battle of their heirs, Antiochus III of Syria (using Indian elephants) vs. Ptolemy IV of Egypt (using African elephants)
- **Cannae (216 BC):** In this classic battle of double-envelopment (both “wings” of one army’s line encircling the enemy’s line and attacking it from the rear), Hannibal of Carthage faces Varro of Rome.
- **Zama (202 BC):** In this final battle of the Second Punic War, Hannibal of Carthage makes a last stand against Scipio Africanus of Rome.

1.2 Class lessons

The lessons of game design learned from playing *Ancients* will be referred to during next week’s class regarding unit design, next week’s class on **Combat Methods**, and also broadly and philosophically throughout the entire course.

Note that these rules are presented using the **Case System** of structural and numeric hierarchical organization. You’ll be learning more about this in Lesson 8 and your Graded

Course Project Game should use the same rules formatting when you submit it at the end of the quarter. So pay attention not only to what the rules *say*, but also *how they are organized*.

What follows are the rules to the **Ancients** games we will be playing it in class. This version of the rules includes some changes and deletions from the complete game that you can download. This was done deliberately so that, for example, you do not have to learn about terrain effects (i.e., all of the battles are fought over featureless maps).

2. Equipment Used

2.1 The map

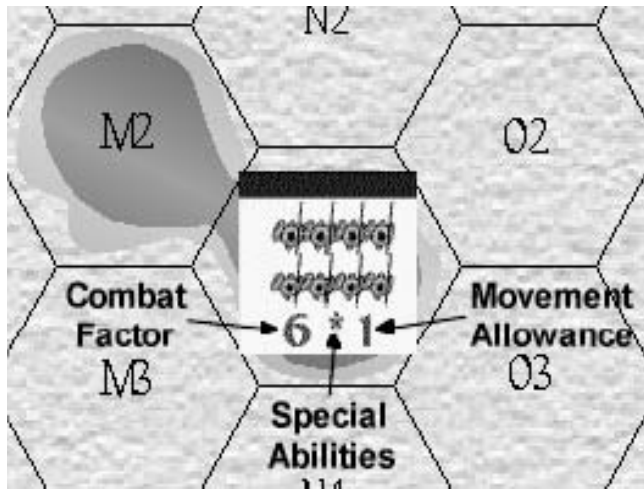
The map represents a piece of flat, featureless ground typical of where large ancient battles were fought. Both sides often sought such ground so that their forces could more easily maneuver. The map scale varies depending on the battle, but is within the range of 100 to 200 yards per hex.

2.2 The playing pieces

The playing pieces represent the troop-types involved in each battle. On the front of each piece is printed its “cohesive,” full-strength value. The back of each piece represents its reduced-strength value when “disordered” (see Rules Section 2.7).

In game design, we refer to these pieces as ‘units.’

To provide units corresponding to the unit size of every army in every period of time would be impractical for a simple strategy game like **Ancients**. Instead, generic pieces representing like types of troops are used.



2.2.1 Special Abilities

Some units have special abilities. These are noted and listed below:

- None
- * Strength doubled when fighting *Cavalry type* units (see 2.2.2.2, below)
- A Missile fire rating of “A”
- B Missile fire rating of “B”

2.2.2 Unit descriptions

The following are descriptions of the various types of units that are used in our classroom **Ancients** battles. Listed with each type are their Combat Factor, Movement Allowance, and Special Ability (if any) for their ordered and disordered sides.

2.2.2.1 Infantry-type units



Light Infantry (LI). **Cohesive side: 2-3;** **Disordered side: 2-3.** These are mobs of poorly armed, often untrained men. Typically they have a shield, one weapon, and no body armor. They would be peasant levies or barbarians.



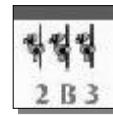
Heavy Infantry (HI). **Cohesive side: 4-2;** **Disordered side: 3-2.** Heavily armed, well trained professional infantry. Examples include Roman Legions or Viking Huskarls.



Phalanx (PX). **Cohesive side: 6*1;** **Disordered side: 2*1.** Heavily armed infantry, massed shoulder-to-shoulder with pikes (long spears). The wall of shield and tangle of spears gives them extra defense against missiles (see 2.2.1, above).



Light Archers (LA). **Cohesive side: 1A3;** **Disordered side: 0A3.** Archers or possibly slingers. They have little or no body armor. Their purpose is to disrupt the enemy, not fight hand-to-hand.



Mixed Missile (MM). **Cohesive side: 2B3;** **Disordered side: 1B3.** Javelin throwers, Slingers, and Archers with limited hand-to-hand ability, such as Greek peltasts. Or, these could include regular infantry with a high proportion of missile troops.

2.2.2.2 Cavalry type units

Phalanx infantry units and **Elephant** units are *double* strength when attacking or defending against these units.



Light Cavalry (LC). **Cohesive side: 2-6;** **Disordered side: 1-6.** Mounted troops with little or no body armor. They are usually armed with spears or javelins. They are generally used to scout, screen flanks, or to ride down fleeing foes.



Heavy Cavalry (HC). **Cohesive side: 4-5;** **Disordered side: 2-5.** Well armored, main shock cavalry. They can execute charges, and can deliver the decisive blow in battle.

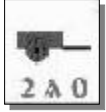


Chariots (CH). **Cohesive side: 4B4;** **Disordered side: 1B4.** Light, two-wheeled wagons carrying two or three warriors.

2.2.2.3 Other unit types



Elephants (EL). **Cohesive side: 6*3;** **Disordered side: 3*3.** Either African or Asian type with a fighting platform (howdah) and several warriors. Note that horses feared being around these beasts, hence their special ability (see 2.2.1 above).



Camp (CP). **Cohesive side: 2A0;** **Disordered side: 1A0.** This is the baggage of the army in the field. It may be fortified by a dirt moat or palisade or just by pulling the wagons into a circle. It contains the war-chest, supplies, loot, and sometimes even families of the troops. Needless to say, it is very important to the morale and physical needs of the men.



Leader (LDR). **Cohesive side: x2;** **Disordered side: n/a.** These are not meant to be actual persons, but rather ‘command points.’ This is to reflect the ability of especially able generals or a good military system, or just to balance a scenario. They are critical to the battle. *Use them wisely.*

2.3 The Combat Results Tables

The Combat Results Tables are used to find the result of a particular attack made by either missile fire (arrows, spears, slings, etc.) at range, or melee combat (swords, pikes, and so forth) when units are adjacent and fighting hand-to-hand. Units attack individually against a single target enemy unit in an effort to (usually) first disorder the enemy unit, then eliminate that unit by inflicting a *second* disordered result upon it.

2.4 The die



The die is used **only** with the Combat Results Table to determine the result of attacks. **The die has nothing to do with movement of units.**

3. Basic Procedure

3.1 Game setup

Each side sets up their units on the hexes illustrated on the game map with their cohesive (full-strength) sides up. “Unit facing” (see 6.3) is important in *Ancients*, so be sure that they are aligned in the hexes ‘pointing’ the correct way (as illustrated at on map).

3.2 Sequence of Play

Each complete game of *Ancients* ends at the conclusion of the *sixth (6th) Game Turn*. Each Game Turn consists of two **Player Turns**: the *First* Player Turn followed by the *Second* Player Turn. When it is *your* Player Turn, you are known at the **Phasing Player** and the other player is known as the **Non-Phasing Player**.

Who is the first player? The first player is the one listed first after the battle’s title on the map.

Each Player Turn follows this *exact* sequence:

- Step 1.** Panic
- Step 2.** Remove Leaders
- Step 3.** Movement
- Step 4.** Place Leaders
- Step 5.** Enemy Missile Combat
- Step 6.** Friendly Melee Combat
- Step 7.** Rally

The above seven steps make up a complete Player Turn. Once the Second Player has completed his or her Player Turn, the Game Turn is over. After the Second Player’s sixth Player Turn, the game is over. Add up the Victory Points (see 9.0 below) and determine the winner.

Sequence of Play example

Each complete turn in the game must proceed *exactly* according to the step-by-step Sequence of Play. Doing something out of sequence is a violation of the rules.

As an example of how the procedure works, let’s suppose that we’re fighting the battle of Cannae and you are the Carthaginian Player (Hannibal) and I am the Roman Player (Varro). Each turn we would follow this order of activities:

- First,** you would check your army’s panic status.
- Second,** you would remove your Leaders from the map and set them aside.
- Third,** you would move those of your playing pieces that you wish to move.
- Fourth,** after you have completed **all** of the movement you wish to for this turn, you must place your Leader(s) back on the board.

While you are doing all of the above, I do nothing. While you are doing this you are *not* allowed to attack any of my playing pieces!

Fifth, after you have finished moving your pieces, I have a chance to attack your units, but *only* using Missile combat from any or all of my units with a rating of “A” or “B” between their Combat Strength and Movement Allowance.

During this, my ‘defensive missile fire’ step, you do nothing (except suffer any combat results that I inflict upon your units via the Missile Fire Table).

Sixth, after you have suffered the slings and arrows of my missile units, you then have a chance to melee attack my pieces via the Combat Results Table. You may only attack those of my pieces that are right next to (adjacent to) your pieces and that your pieces are *facing*.

During this, your ‘melee combat’ step, I have the option to have eligible units Retreat Before Combat. If my units don’t voluntarily retreat, then I do nothing (except suffer any combat results that you inflict upon my units via the Combat Results Table).

Seventh, finally, you can Rally your disordered unit stacked with your Leaders.

After you have finished all of these steps (i.e., your Player Turn), it becomes *my* portion of the turn (i.e., my Player Turn).

After I complete all seven of these same steps, in order (including your 'defensive missile fire' step), we have played a complete Game Turn. Now we repeat the Sequence of Play again and do the next Game Turn.

4. Panic

An army "panics" when it has either:

- Lost a certain number of Strength Points (as shown on the map). *Use the full-strength value of eliminated units when determining that army's losses for panic.* Or,
- All of its Leader units have been captured or eliminated.

When an army initially panics, all of its Cohesive (full-strength) units **not currently stacked with a Leader** are flipped over to their Disordered sides. *Leaders are able to keep the units they're stacked with from panicking.*

An army can only panic once per game.

Once it has panicked, it remains a panicked army for the remainder of the game and must conduct Panic Movement (see 6.7 below).

5. Remove Leaders

Remove all the Phasing Player's Leader units and set them aside.

6. Movement

In his Movement Step, a player may move some, none, or all his units, within the following restrictions.

6.1 Which units may move

During his movement part of the turn, a player may move any or all of his units. The player moves his units one at a time in any order he wishes (the movement of each being completed before the next is moved). A unit's movement is completed once the movement of a subsequent unit is begun, or when the player indicates that the last unit to be moved has completed its movement. A player may choose to **not** move some or all of his units (exception: Panic Movement, see 6.7). A player may never move any of the opposing player's units.

6.2 Procedure

Units are moved from hex to adjacent hex in a continuous path of hexes, paying 1 Movement Point to enter each hex. There is no skipping or jumping over hexes allowed. Units may move up to their Movement Allowance each turn, but may never exceed their movement allowance in a single turn. Nor may they "save" movement points from one turn to another, or "loan" points to another unit.

6.3 Facing

Any unit on the map must be arranged so that it is facing one of the 6 adjacent hexes. The 3 hexes at its 'top' are defined as that unit's **Front**. The other 3 hexes (adjacent to the unit's bottom) are defined as its **Flank**. Its center Flank hex is also known as its 'center rear hex.'

Important: Leaders and Camps have a 360 degree Front facing (i.e., they have no Flank facing).

6.4 Stacking

No more than one unit may occupy a single hex at a time.

6.4.1 Exceptions

Leaders, Volley Markers, and captured camps are exempt from this restriction and any number of these may be in a hex (with or without combat units).

6.4.2 Enemy units

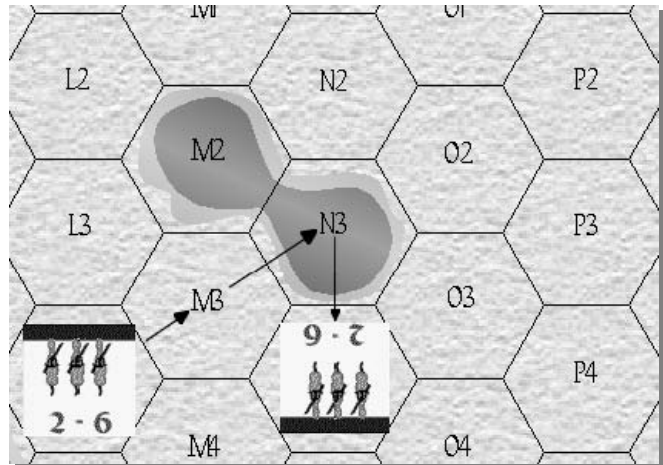
A unit may not move over an enemy unit (except Leaders alone, which are immediately eliminated).

6.4.3 Moving through friendly units

A unit *may* move **through** another friendly unit. When this happens, however, both units become Disordered (if not already Disordered). *But see Optional Rule 10.1.*

6.5 Moving

To move, a unit enters one of its **three Frontal hexes**. It is then adjusted so that its center rear hex is facing toward the hex it just left. It pays 1 Movement Point (MP) per hex entered. If a unit does not have sufficient Movement Points to enter a given hex, it may not enter that hex.



In the example above, the unit pays 1 Movement Point (MP) to enter the hex on its right front; 2 MPs to enter the hill hex; 1 MP to change facing; and then 1 MP to enter the hex now on its front center. It could then spend its remaining point if so desired.

Note that as a unit moves **into** a hex it always faces away from the hex it **just left**.

6.6 Change facing

A unit may turn up to 180 degrees (i.e., change facing to any other direction) at a cost of 1 Movement Point.

6.7 Panic movement

If your army has panicked, then during each Movement step of your Player Turns, all of your army's *Disordered* units **must** move away from enemy units toward the nearest map edge.

Each panicking army unit **must** do this Panic Movement until it is either 1) Rallied by a Leader (and, hence, is no longer Disordered and subject to Panic Movement) or 2) exits off the map (as per 6.8 below).

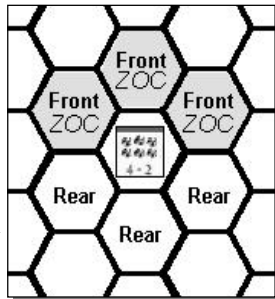
6.8 Exiting the map

When units Panic and exit the map, they do so by moving to one of the hexes on the map's edge and then paying 1 additional Movement Point to exit off the map (as if they were moving to an imaginary hex just off the board edge).

Units that exit the map may not re-enter play.

6.9 Zones of Control

A unit's three Frontal hexes constitute its **Zone of Control** (ZOC). Units are free to enter an enemy ZOC, but there is a restriction for *leaving* one: a unit that leaves an enemy ZOC at any point during its Movement Step may **not** attack in the upcoming Combat Step during that same Player Turn.



The purpose of this is to prevent a unit from disengaging, marching around the enemy's flank, and making an attack before his opponent has an opportunity to respond.

6.10 Camps

Camps have a zero (0) Movement Allowance and thus cannot move.

6.10.1 Capturing a Camp

Units which capture an enemy camp must remain in the camp hex for the remainder of the game (they are 'looting').

6.10.2 Looting units

Looting units have no Flank hexes and cannot be attacked by missile fire. Looting units themselves may never attack.

7. Replace Leaders

Replace your Leaders on the map that were set aside during step 1. Each Leader may be placed in any hex containing a friendly unit. More than one friendly Leader may be placed on a hex containing friendly units.

8. Enemy missile combat

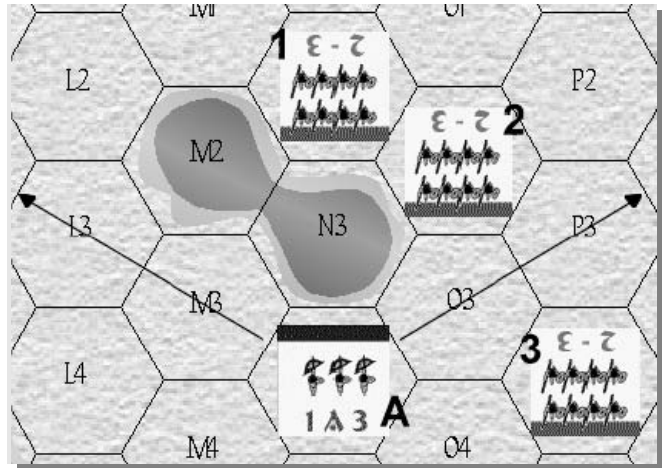
The Non-Phasing (i.e., the one that didn't just move) may now fire with any units that have a Missile Fire Rating of "A" or "B."

8.1 Arc of fire

A unit may only fire at any unit within a 120 degree arc of its front and within its Line of Sight (below).

8.2 Line of sight

The firing unit must be able to trace a Line of Sight to its target. Other units block this line of sight. When firing directly between two hexes, both must be blocked in order for the Line of Sight to be blocked. (See the example below.)



In this example, unit A is the firing unit. The lines from unit A show its 120 degree firing arc.

Unit A may *not* fire unit 1 as its Line of Sight is blocked by a hill.

It may fire at unit 2 since it would be firing between two hexes and only one blocks its Line of Sight.

Unit A may not fire at unit 3 as it is out of unit A's firing arc.

8.3 Single attacks

Each unit fires individually, not in combination with other units.

A unit may fire only once during each Enemy Missile Combat step.

A target unit can be fired upon any number of times during a single Enemy Missile Combat step.

8.4 Fire mechanics

To determine the effect of a unit firing, find the correct column on the Missile Fire Table for the type of firing unit as determined by the firing unit's Special Ability (e.g., its Missile Rating of either "A" or "B").

Cross-index the firing unit's range to the target unit with the target unit's type. This gives the number (or spread of numbers) needed to hit the target. Roll one die each time a unit fires to determine whether or not a hit was scored (i.e., if the number rolled was within the spread) and, if the

target unit was hit, apply a 'DD' result to it (as explained in 9.6 below) before moving on to the next fire attack.

8.5 Effects of firing on the firing unit

After a unit has fired, a **Volley marker** is placed on it.

A unit with a Volley marker on it may not move, change facing, or attack. It *may* retreat before combat.

8.6 Camps

When being used for Fire Combat, Camps do not have an arc of fire. They may fire at any unit with range and Line of Sight, regardless of position.

Also, Camps are immune to all incoming fire attacks.

9. Friendly melee combat

The Phasing Player may now attack with any units eligible to do so. Each attack is announced and resolved before conducting the next melee combat.

9.1 Single attacks

Each unit may make only one attack per phase, even if its target Retreats Before Combat (see 9.3 below).

Each unit attacks individually, not in combination with other units.

An enemy unit may be attacked any number of times during a single Friendly Melee Combat step.

9.2 Forward facing

A unit can attack only those enemy units in one of its three Frontal hexes.

MELEE COMBAT SEQUENCE

Step 1: Retreat before combat

9.3 Retreat before combat

A unit under attack may retreat one hex if its owner desires if *and* it meets **all** of the following criteria:

- Its Movement Allowance is **greater than** that of the attacker,
- It is not Disordered, and
- There is an empty adjacent hex which is not itself adjacent to the attacking unit.

9.3.1 Procedure

The retreating unit enters a vacant, adjacent hex which is not itself adjacent to the attacking unit, adjusting facing so that its center rear hex-side is adjacent to the hex from which it retreated (*as a moving unit does*). This may be done into an Enemy Zone of Control (see 5.9).

9.3.2 Disorder

The retreating unit is then flipped to its Disordered side.

Step 2: Conduct the melee

9.4 Compute combat strength

The Combat Strengths of the attacking unit and the defending unit are first multiplied by any modifications as follows:

Leaders: Units stacked with Leaders are doubled for attack or defense, for each Leader present. *So two Leaders in a hex would multiply a unit's Combat Strength by 4, while three Leaders would multiply it by 8.*

Flank: Units attacking from an enemy's Flank hex are doubled. *Note that Camps have no Flank hexes, so units are never doubled in attacks against them in this manner.*

Special Abilities: Units with an asterisk ('*') Special Ability have their combat strength doubled when attacking or defending against cavalry type units (*Light Cavalry, Heavy Cavalry, and Chariots*).

Combat Strength of Zero (0): Units with a zero for their Combat Strength may not attack in melee, but defend as though their Combat Strength were a '1.' They are not subject to any beneficial modifiers from Leaders (*you are effectively multiplying by 0*).

9.5 Compute combat odds

Compare the modified attackers strength to the modified defender's strength. Reduce these values to a ratio of the attacker's strength to defender's strength (i.e., divide the attacker's strength by the defender's and drop any fractions).

For example, $20 / 10 = 2:1$; while $19 / 10 = 1:1$.

This ratio determines the odds column to be used on the Combat Results Table.

Step 3: Apply the melee result

9.6 Combat resolution

Roll a die and cross-index with the column found in Step 2. The results are defined as follows:

M (Melee). Both units are flipped to Disordered status (if not already). Units already Disordered are not further affected (*and neither are any Leaders stacked with them*).

AD (Attacker Disordered). The attacking unit is flipped to Disordered status. If the unit is already Disordered, it is eliminated. *If the attacker had any Leaders present, they must check for Leader Loss (8.4).*

DD (Defender Disordered). The defending unit is flipped to Disordered status. If the unit is already Disordered, it is eliminated. *If the defender had any Leaders present, they must check for Leader Loss (8.4).*

DE (Defender Eliminated). The defending unit is removed from play. *If the defender had any Leaders present, they must check for Leader Loss (8.4).*

Step 4: Attacker advance after combat

9.7 Advance after combat

If the defender's hex is vacated (whether due to Retreat Before Combat or elimination), the attacker **must** move the victorious unit into the empty hex. Facing is implemented as in regular movement (i.e., the rear center toward hex just vacated).

Important exceptions: Phalanx and Heavy Infantry are free of this obligation. They *may* advance if they wish, but are not required to do so.

Melee Combat example:

A defending Cohesive Phalanx unit (strength 6) is attacked by a Cohesive Heavy Cavalry unit (strength 4). The Heavy Cavalry unit is attacking from the Phalanx unit's Flank and has two Leaders stacked with it.

Step 1: The Phalanx unit may *not* Retreat Before Combat as it is not faster than the attacking Heavy Cavalry unit.

Step 2: The attacker's strength of 4 is multiplied by 2 (for the flank attack), then again by 2 (for one Leader) and then *again* by 2 (for the second Leader) for a total strength of 32. The defender's strength of 6 is multiplied by 2 for Special Ability versus cavalry unit types for a total strength of 12. The odds are 32 / 12, and that rounds down to a 2:1 attack. *That is, 12 goes into 32 two times.*

Step 3: A '2' is rolled on the die and the result is "M" (Melee). Both units are flipped to their Disordered sides. A separate Leader loss roll must be made for every Leader in this battle (i.e., affected by this single die roll as per 11.4 below). *Thus, the attacker's two Leaders that were affected by this Melee result would each roll a die. If the result is a '1,' that Leader is removed from play. Ouch!*

Step 4: Since the defender's hex is still occupied, there is no Attacker Advance After Combat required.

10. Rally

Two tasks are performed during your Rally Step:

1. All Volley Markers are removed from friendly units. *Your missile units that conducted Missile Attacks during the previous enemy Player Turn acquire Volley Markers, as can your elephants when Optional Rule 13.2 is being used.*
2. Any phasing Disordered unit stacked with a friendly Leader is flipped back to its Cohesive (full strength) side. *If your army has panicked (see 4), this rallying stops that unit from panicking and being forced to move itself off the battlefield (map).*

11. Leaders

Leader units ("Leaders") are not large formations of troops and therefore behave differently.

11.1 Leader movement

Leaders have no Movement Allowance. They are simply placed where desired with friendly units at the conclusion of the Phasing Player's Movement step.

11.2 Leader retreat before combat

A Leader may always Retreat Before Combat (6.3). Simply remove that Leader from the map, setting it aside until your next Movement Phase.

Any unit that stacked with a Leader that Retreats Before Combat must either itself Retreat Before Combat or, if unable or unwilling, suffers an immediate 'DD' result before the attack is conducted. *The sight of fleeing Leaders is very bad for their morale.*

11.3 Leaders in combat

Leaders double the strength of any unit(s) they are stacked with, in both attack and defense. *And see Optional Rule 13.3.*

11.4 Leader loss

If the unit a Leader is stacked with becomes Disordered or is eliminated, roll a die. A 1 means the leader is killed, while a 2-6 has no effect. *An eliminated unit and surviving Leader leaves the Leader unit(s) alone in that hex.*

No roll is made for a Leader on an already Disordered unit that suffers a 'Melee' combat result.

If enemy units enter a Leader's hex either during Movement or Advance After Combat, that Leader is eliminated (i.e., considered captured).

12. Victory conditions

The performance of the players is evaluated by counting Victory Points. The player with more points is the winner. If both have the same number of points, the battle is a draw.

One Victory Point is awarded for each of the following:

- Capturing the enemy's Camp (even if recaptured later).
- Causing the enemy army to panic.
- Having **twice as many or more** total Strength Points left on the map then your opponent has at the end of the game. **Count full strength value of all units remaining on the map**, including those that are Disordered (flip Disordered units over to their full-strength, Cohesive sides before counting their Strength Points). Camps and panicking units do **not** count. *So if your army panics, you'll want to rally as many of your highest Strength Point value units as possible (see 10).*

13. Optional rules

Once players have mastered the basic game, they may wish to add some of the following rules by mutual agreement.

13.1 Skirmishers

As an exception to Rule 6.4.3, **no** disruption occurs when a unit moving (or being moved through) is either a Mixed Missile (MM) or Light Archer (LA) unit. *These 'skirmishers' specialized in moving through friendly lines when their time at the front of a battle line was done.*

13.2 Elephants

Elephants were very temperamental beasts in battle. Any number of ingenious techniques were used to cause them to panic (often into their own troops). To reflect this, a player may use one of his 'Command Points' (i.e., a Leader) to affect **all** enemy Elephant units.

At the beginning of the Phasing Player's Movement step, he may voluntarily set aside **one** Leader counter until his next Player Turn. If he does so, he may then roll one die for each enemy Elephant unit and apply the following results:

- 1 to 3: **No effect.**
- 4 or 5: **Balks.** That Elephant unit cannot move or attack during the Enemy's next Player Turn. *Place a Volley marker on it as a reminder.*
- 6: **Panics.** The Phasing Player gains control of that Elephant unit for his Movement and Combat steps during this Player Turn only. Afterward, that Elephant unit cannot move or attack during the Enemy's next Player Turn. *Place a Volley marker on it as a reminder.*

13.3 Leader superiority in battle

When one player has more Leaders in a combat than the other, he is entitled to an additional +1 bonus (if the attacker has Leader superiority in that battle) or a -1 bonus (if the defender has Leader superiority in that battle) to the Melee Combat die roll. This is in addition to the Leaders' doubling effects. *The result is that the Leaders will be more decisive in battle and not die as often.*