POLEMOS

S.P.Q.R.

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BACCUS 6MM

Contents

Introduction

The Polemos project sets out to create a series of rules which share a basic structure, yet are carefully tailored for specific historical periods. You do not wish to fight an American Civil War battle and be forced to use concepts designed for the English Civil War, and we don't want to produce bland mechanics devoid of any period flavour or distinction.

Linked to this worthy ideal is that we have also set out to produce a set of mechanics and basing principles that have been designed from the outset for 6mm figures. They give impressive games with lots of figures on the table, even for the very smallest scenarios and armies. Those of you with larger scale figures will of course be able to enjoy games using Polemos, but must accept the subsequent loss in visual appearance and impact.

The final guiding principle is that we know that the worst possible thing that a set of new rules can do is to ask a new user to rebase all their existing miniatures in order to play them. We can assure anyone looking at these for the first time, that Polemos, as if by magic, will allow for any basing scheme to be used provided both armies use the same system.

The rules systems and army lists in this booklet provide all that wargamers will need in order to play the game (apart of course from the armies, a table, dice and a measuring device). However, the advent of the internet enables us to offer extra support and develop new ideas. The Polemos pages can be accessed from the Baccus web site www.baccus6mm.com. There is also a section on the main Baccus discussion forum that will put you in contact with other players, as well as a dedicated group on the Yahoo forums.

The Polemos rules have not been developed with competition games in mind. As a result, we anticipate that situations will arise during a game which are not covered by the rules. Should such an impasse rear its ugly head, the participants must use 'The Most Important Rule' in any of the booklets.

The 50% Rule

In case of any argument, the two sides are defined. One side is given as side 1, the other as side 2. A d6 is rolled. If the result is 1, 2 or 3, side 1 wins. Otherwise side 2 wins. Both players are expected to sort it out in the pub/bar/other place of refreshment afterwards.
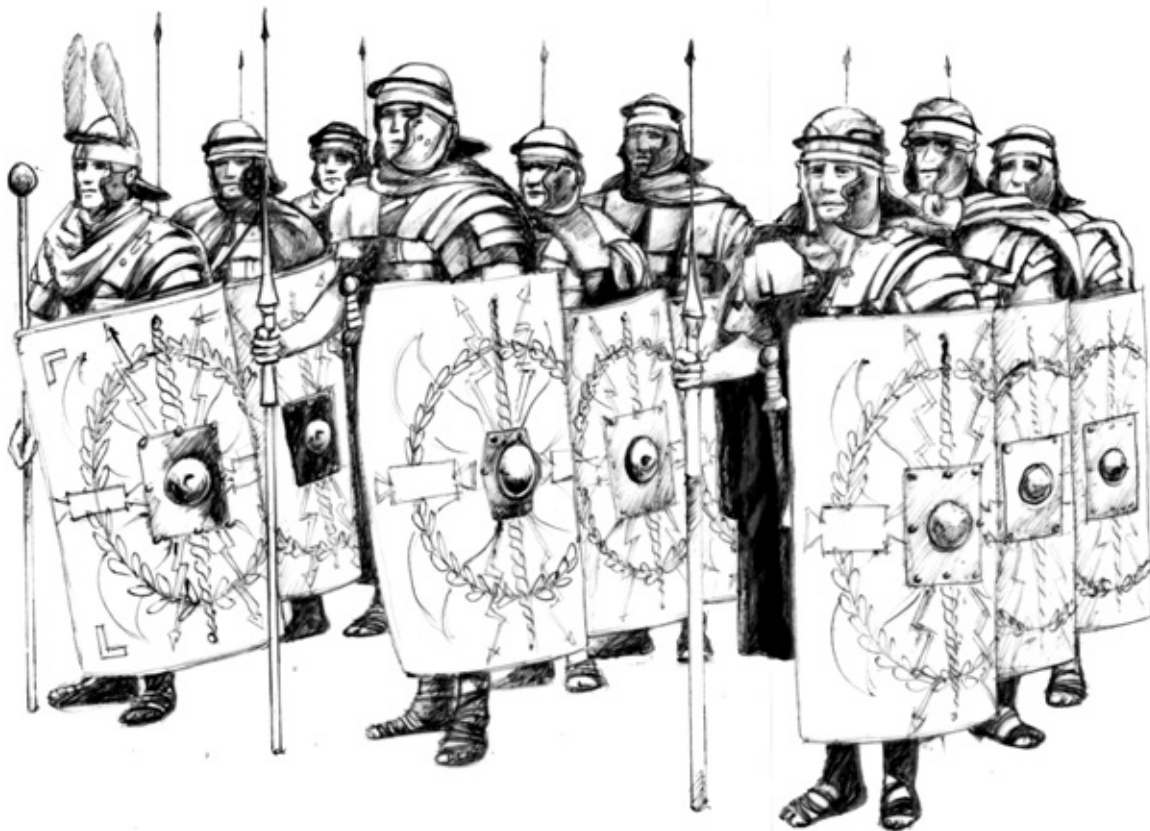
Introduction

Welcome to Polemos: S.P.Q.R.

In keeping with the overall Polemos philosophy, we offer another set of rules dedicated to a narrow era of history, this time the expansion of the Roman Empire roughly from Julius Caesar to Marcus Aurelius, or a little further. In the wider wargame world 'ancient' rules are generally perceived to cover the whole sweep of history from 3000 BC to 1500 AD. This has led to some strange effects, such as earnest arguments over the relative merits of the Roman legionary and the Agincourt era French man at arms. It is not our place to question the logic of such discussions, but they are not for us. Three centuries of warfare are quite enough for us to cope with.

In common with all rule writers, we have had to make compromises, educated guesses and unwarranted assumptions. Wide reading in both original sources and modern interpretations has helped form these, but gross uncertainty still prevails. As wargaming demands certainty, we have had to make decisions that others might regard as dubious. If this includes you, then feel free to alter the rules as you see fit, and let us know how it works out. The Polemos Yahoo! Group is for exactly this purpose. Similarly, if you think we have missed something important such as a source or some archaeological evidence, then do let us know. The rules are written on paper, not carved in stone, and certainty is impossible in wargaming as in warfare.

To write any set of wargame rules requires a model of combat, explicit or not. In this case, we have followed the recent work of Goldsworthy[1] and Sabin[2] on the mechanics of unit combat. Put briefly, most combat

was between very cautious men whose prime concern was not to get killed or wounded. Only a few, junior officers and occasional heroes, actually made serious attacks, and it was these who made the difference between winning or not. This was more likely when the heroes were under the eye of senior officers, as they could win large rewards, both financial and in acclaim, if they were seen to be performing an act of extreme (or suicidal) bravery.

While it is impossible to translate such a model directly to wargames, it is clear that morale and training, along with leadership at all levels, made the most difference to combat outcome. The rules have therefore tried to focus on this issue. Armament, such as the difference between a Dacian falx and a spear, was definitely secondary. Thus, Dacian foot are classified as 'tribal', on the basis that there is no evidence that I am aware of that falx and spearmen fought separately, nor that it made a difference in their tactical formations and use. Similarly the difference between cataphracts with horse armour and those without is largely ignored; there was no difference in the tactical usage of these troops, and they were probably in mixed units anyway. It is of course quite possible that I am wrong in this, but there seems to be little or no actual evidence either way. As opposed to other writers, I have assumed that absence of evidence is, in this case, evidence of absence. Instead of splitting the troops on the basis of armour, I have presumed that the units were mixed, and the better armoured men probably gravitated to the front of the unit.

Introduction

In keeping with the spirit described above, I have included some references. Hopefully, this will not put off those who just want to play a wargame, as they are confined to the more discursive bits of the rules describing armies and troops, and also to the army lists for specific battles. However, they are there to encourage those who are interested to find where the underlying evidence and assumptions have been derived from, and to supply additional evidence or their own interpretations if they differ from ours. As mentioned, the Polemos email list is set up for discussions of this nature.

With this in mind, I have tried to use fairly accessible texts. While some of the secondary sources, such as journal articles, may require the use of a university library or inter-library loans facilities, I have given readily available references to texts, usually in the Penguin classics edition.

Where these have not been to hand, I have given a reference to an online version of the text. The version of Appian referenced can be found at Project Perseus:

http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/

Writing this rule set has been a massive labour, which I have often considered giving up. It has also required 'unlearning' much of the received wisdom I thought I knew about the Roman Empire and her enemies. I hope you find the result worthwhile.

Setting up the game

SCALES AND BASING

Figure Scale

- A base of formed or unformed foot will represent approximately 400-500 men - a cohort (or so) for the Romans, a handy sized unit for tribesmen.
- A base of skirmishers will represent 100 or so youths and other enthusiasts dashing around throwing javelins and the like.
- A base of cavalry will represent roughly 250 horses and their riders, formed from 8 turmae (if you are Romans, or Roman influenced).
- A base of light horse represents about 75 men and mounts, or a couple of Roman turmae.
- A base of chariots represents 10-20 vehicles, warriors and drivers.
- A base of artillery represents up to 10 real pieces.
- A general's base represents the great man himself, together with hangers on, relatives, messengers, standard bearers and musicians.

These numbers are approximate and vary, particularly with troop morale and experience (see 4.1). A base of veterans might have less than half the actual number of soldiers as a base of levies, but still be more effective in combat.

Ground Scale

A fighting base width represents 200 paces; a base depth represents 100 paces. These distances may seem on the large side, but cohorts deployed on a frontage of approximately 150 meters, and did not form continuous lines. All units need gaps otherwise they quickly loose control when advancing, and land up in a vulnerable mess. Since Polemos S.P.Q.R. is designed for big battles, the maneuver unit is a cohort or equivalent. Within this base size, you can assume that the centurions respond to the local situation with appropriate orders and formations.

A general's base width is 100 paces square, and represents the area over which his presence is assumed to have some direct effect.

Time scale

There is no specific time scale in these rules. A turn represents a focus of action during the engagement rather than a specific span of time.

We have no truck with fixed duration turns, as these lead to very odd results indeed.

Bases

The basic unit of manoeuvre in Polemos S.P.Q.R. is the **Base**. This is a group of wargames figures mounted permanently on a single base of a given size. The actual number, size and position of the figures on the base is not important.

It is not vital to the rules that the specified base sizes are adhered to. So long as both armies use the same sized bases and the 2:1 ratio of base width to base depth is maintained, the rules will still work.

The suggested principal base size for 6mm to 15mm figures is 60mm x 30mm, and for larger castings 80mm x 40mm. In fact the rules will work with any size bases provided that both sides are organised consistently.

All distances are given in base widths (BW) and base depths (BD).

Messengers denoting the pool of available Tempo Points may be depicted by a single mounted figure on a small round base.

Figure Sizes

Polemos S.P.Q.R. will work with any size of figure provided both sides are based consistently.

The pages of this book are illustrated with examples of 6mm figures which work exceptionally well with the basing concepts. However, many gamers play Polemos rules using anything from 2mm to 30mm figures.

Basing Options

The subject of bases in wargaming is a vexed one. No sooner are your little men safely glued down on their little MDF or card platform with suitable scenic additions, when along comes the new set of rules demanding a radically different approach. It is something which causes much grief and anguish to so many in the hobby.

We are well aware of this problem and have striven to make the Polemos series as 'base-friendly' as we can. Effectively, provided both sides have their figures mounted on bases with similarly sized frontages then all is well with the world. However, we've found that wargamers can make an art form of finding questions and insecurities about the whole subject so this section will show you what options are available to you.

Size of base.

It is fairly safe to generalise that where Ancients rules share something in common it is that where they use an area base mechanic as in Polemos, base frontages have settled down to 40mm, 60mm, 80mm and 120mm. Base depths vary between rules, but this is less important as it can be worked around.

The choice of frontage is dictated by a number of factors including the size of figures used and the preference and therefore recommendation of the authors.

Throughout these rules the examples of painted and based figures are using the 'Polemos Standard' of 60mm x 30mm bases, as these work very well with the 6mm sized figures mounted on them. Many will prefer the smaller 40mm frontage as they fit in with existing armies based for other systems or want to play larger games on smaller tables. Others will want to take advantage of the possibilities offered by the even larger bases and create mini-dioramas. The rules will work with any frontage, provided both sides are based in the same fashion.

Numbers of figures per base.

Some rules systems will state that one figure represents a fixed number of real men, you can then work out that, for example, at ratio of 1:20 a Roman cohort of 480 legionaries can be represented by 24 figures.

Others ignore this link, but do state that you must use a certain number of figures per base. For example, a legionary cohort must contain eight figures as this is important in the game mechanics.

Polemos, on the other hand is much more free and easy. With these rules, it simply does not matter how many figures you place on a base. It is a case of what you think looks best, or how many toy soldiers you want to invest or paint.

A selection of differing basing styles and sizes. Provided both sides used the same size of bases, any of these options would be perfectly usable for Polemos rules.

Tempo

Example 3

VI TP

I TP
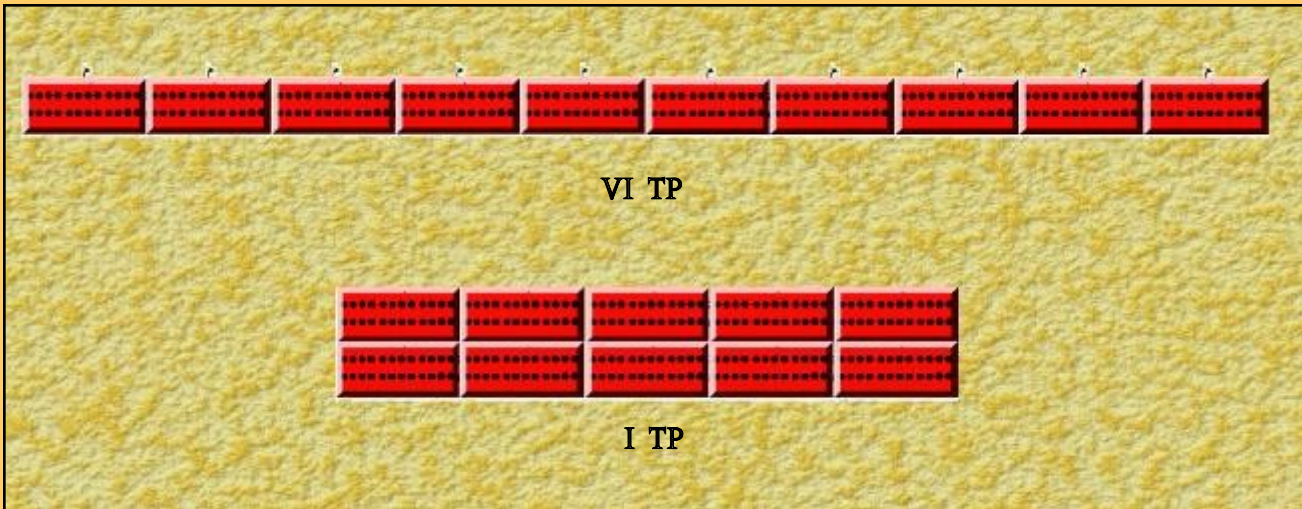
Legate Ginun Tonicus wishes to advance his legion on the barbarians. After all, they have to learn Latin sometime. As the tempo player, he orders his 10 base wide formation to advance. Being formed, this costs 10 points, less 2 for being formed and in a group making 8. He is present, so the total cost is 6. If the troops were 5 wide and two deep, the total would be 5, less 2 for being a formed group, less 2 of the officer's presence, making 1.

Moral 1: Formed troops work best in lines, but not too wide.

Moral 2: Officers are useful creatures on the battlefield.

Rallying

At the end of the turn there is a rally phase where both sides may choose to expend any remaining TPs from their General's pool or any unused TPs of Officers to assist individual Bases to recover from adverse (levels of Shaken). A General/Officer may expend TPs to attempt to rally a base (see page 37).

Impact of Officer characteristics

Rash officers will always use their own tempo points

Cautious officers whose command include one or more bases with any levels of shaken at the beginning of the turn must reserve at least one TP for each such base. Any remaining TPs may be used as desired.

Steady officers can decide on their priorities.

Generals may always decide where to allocate their remaining tempo points after bidding, and may order any base to move or rally.

MOVEMENT

The players move their forces in their respective sections of the movement phase.

The precise sequence within the phase is as follows. The Tempo player is the Active player for the first half of the move with this switching to the non-Tempo player in the second half:

- The Active player announces all charges, expends TPs for charges and marks but does not move the charging bases.

- The Active player expends TPs and moves other relevant bases.

Groups of bases are formed when bases touch, side to side or front of the rear base to the rear of the front base. Any base in such contact with another base is counted as being in a group with it, unless the base is shaken or halted as a result of a combat outcome. Groups may be formed of several ranks. Within a rank, the troop types must be the same. Therefore while a group of three light horse with three chariots behind them is a group, a rank of one light horse and two chariots is not.

Bases moving into charge range of legitimate targets must declare a charge.

Light troops, mounted or foot, contacted frontally by other troops are pushed back by the remaining move of the contacting bases before the close combat is resolved.

Charge Announcement

This takes place in sections 2 and 5 of the move sequence. The player announces which forces will conduct a charge this phase.

A charge may only be announced if the base or one of the bases in a group:

- is facing all or part of the target base;
- is not shaken level 1 or worse
- is in charge range of the target base
- could contact the target base by moving in a direct line to it without crossing any terrain other than a gentle slope.

Note that a force may not declare a charge against a target base if:
- it would have to wheel to face the target base, or
- its charge would contact a friendly base, or
- if the target base is in close combat.

A non-elite base in an army with Hopeless morale may not charge. An elite base of such an army may but adds one level of shaken once it does so (see page 39).

Cavalry charge range is 3BW, infantry 2 BW.

Any other attempt to contact an enemy base is an Advance conducted as a move not as a charge. This includes a move to contact a target base which is already in close combat.

The player should then mark the force as charging and identify the target base(s). The charging base(s) do not move in this phase - they resolve the charge in their ranged combat (phases 3 and 6 - page 25) and close combat (phases 4 and 7 - page 31) phases.

Non-Charging Bases

Movement for these occurs in phases 2 and 5. The active player expends TPs and moves his forces..

A move may involve the base(s) moving forward or changing facing within a group.

Example

Meanwhile, on the other edge of the Empire, two cohorts of Roman auxilia archers are attempting to drive off the attentios off a group of three Parthian horse archer bases. The Roman is the active player and the range is 1BW.
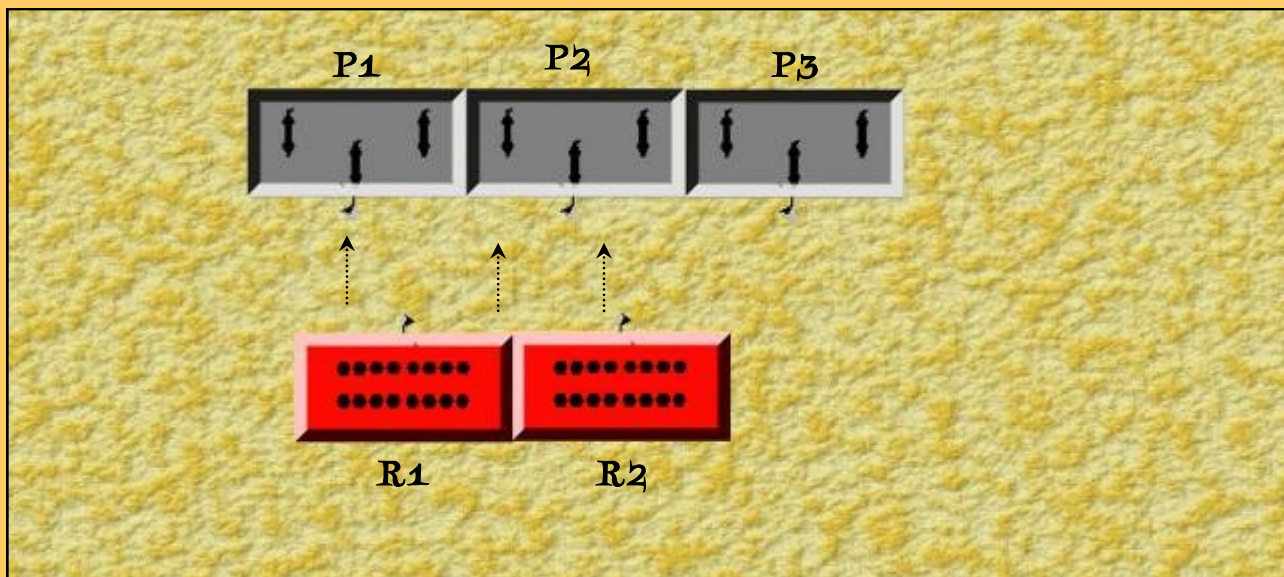
R1, is given the job of shooting at bases P1 and P2. R2 has the easier task of engaging P3.

R1 rolls 5, +4 for archer offensive factor,   = 9

P1 rolls 3, +2 for for Light horse defensive factor, -1 for each extra base shooting at same target (P2)
        = 4   *(Difference of 5)*

P2 rolls 5, +2 for for Light horse defensive factor, -1 for each extra base shooting at same target (P2)
        = 6   *(Difference of 3)*

Consulting the outcome table, P1 must now halt with 1 shaken level and P2 must Recoil also with one shaken level.

R2 rolls 1, +4 for archer offensive factor,   = 5

P3 rolls 4, +2 for for Light horse defensive factor,   = 6   *(Difference of −1)*
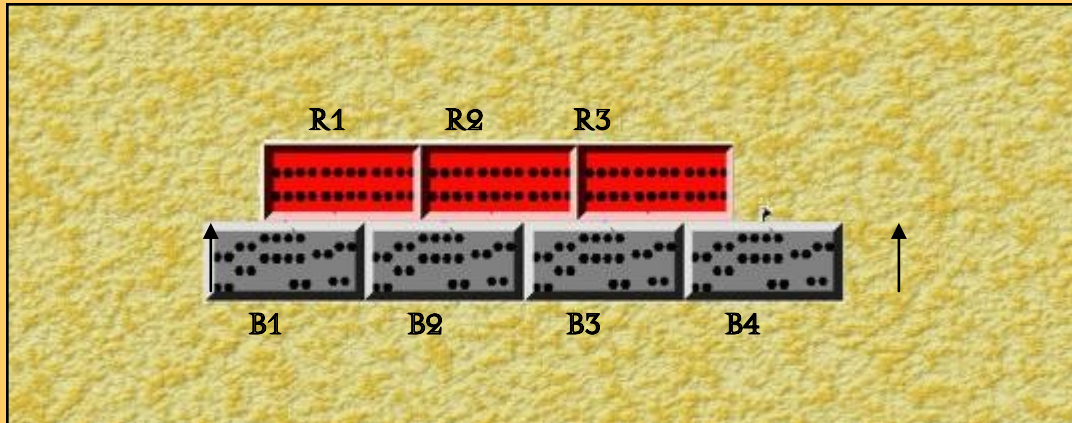
Consulting the outcome table, there is not effect on P3 and it may continue unscathed. R2 must now face

Close Combat Example

The Brigantians who charged home in the ranged combat example are now involved in a desperate fight with the legionaries.   B1 and B2 and B3 take on their opposite numbers leaving B4 to add their weight by supporting B3's assault on R3.

B1 rolls 5, +3 for Tribal foot attacking, +2 for charging into contact,
-1 for being unformed in the first round of combat, -1 for raw   = 8

R1 rolls 2, +3 for for Legionary defensive factor, +1 for veteran   = 6   *(Difference of 2)*

R1 must recoil shaken.

B2 rolls 5, +3 for Tribal foot attacking, +2 for charging into contact,
-1 for being unformed in the first round of combat, -1 for raw   = 8

R2 rolls 5, +3 for for Legionary defensive factor, +1 for veteran   = 9   *(Difference of 1)*

Neither side has gained an advantage and both bases must continue in combat for the next phase

B3 rolls 2, +3 for Tribal foot attacking, +2 for charging into contact,
-1 for being unformed in the first round of combat, -1 for raw   = 5

R3 rolls 1, +3 for for Legionary defensive factor,   = 4   *(Difference of 1)*

B4 rolls 5, +3 for Tribal foot attacking, +2 for charging into contact, +1 for unshaken elite,
-1 for being unformed in the first round of combat, -1 for raw   = 9   *(Difference of 4)*

With a difference of 1, B3 and R3 have drawn with neither side having the advantage. However B4's advantage of 4 over R3 means that the Roman base is recoiled and takes two shaken levels.

With two out of three bases going backwards the Romans have been badly hit by the Brigantian assault.

Moral 1: Use auxilia to shield the legions and break up tribal charges.

Moral 2: Get your tribesmen into the enemy and roll high.