In this brief I am going to expand on the pre-game set up for Clash of Empires and talk through a recent game against British warlord Steve Porter with my Early Imperial Romans. Reading this will take longer than it actually takes to go through the whole pre-game set up!

As you may know, generals and sub-commanders act almost like tokens in CoE, rather than having a full profile. They have slightly different capabilities and some come with certain “traits” built in. All characters are able to roll for a trait before the game begins. These traits affect their performance on the battlefield or affect the army as a whole. So, before doing anything else, always roll for your traits.

For this game, Steve rolled the following traits for his characters:

**General: Cautious**

**Chieftain 1: Beloved Commander**

**Chieftain 2: Disciplinarian**

All of the British characters have the heroic leader trait. This ties them to a unit for the whole game, so Steve chose to drop the trait for his general and kept him mounted on a horse to better survey the action. Most warband type generals have this option so you can choose to lead from the front, or perhaps portray a wiser, more thoughtful warlord.

His warlord turned out to be more thoughtful than wise, his trait meaning that the Romans would decide who would make the first moves in the battle. The chieftains’ traits would be useful during the game, as “Beloved Commander” increases command range and “Disciplinarian” improves the character’s DL score to 7+2 (the “+2” is the amount that he can modify a nearby unit’s own DL to).

My rolls were:

**General: Companions**

**Cavalry Tribune: Aggressive**

**Foot Tribune: Tactician**

Good result for the Romans. The general has a fanatical bodyguard that will protect him if he decides to throw himself in amongst the fighting. My aggressive cavalry tribune affects the pre-game initiative and the other one may redeploy a unit after all troops are on the table, or may accompany a reserve or flanking forces and improve its chances of turning up on time.

We had already decided to play a pitched battle so the next step was to determine the initiative. This is a D6 roll to which is added the army’s strategy rating and additional bonuses depending on the amount of cavalry or light chariots in the army. My aggressive tribune, amount of cavalry and high strategy rating meant that I would add 6 to my roll while Steve’s ponderous hordes would add just 1. Unsurprisingly I won, so I had the initiative.

This allowed me to determine the terrain to some degree and so I selected three terrain pieces (one of which had to be a field) so that I could anchor my flanks on terrain that my enemy would find hard to negotiate and channel him onto the spears of my auxiliaries. In this step, the player with the initiative chooses from 1 to 4 pieces of terrain and his opponent may choose up to one more piece, to a maximum of 4. If Steve had won the initiative, he may have chosen just one piece of terrain, meaning I could only take up to two pieces.

We used the standard method of terrain placement in the rule book. With no roads or rivers present, we formed a pool of our terrain pieces. As I had the initiative I placed a piece first and we took turns until all 4 were placed. No piece may be placed within 30cm of the table centre or within 15cm of another terrain piece. Once all terrain is down, each player has the option of adjusting the placement of each terrain piece. If either player wants a piece to be moved, you make an opposing dice roll (with +1 if you have the initiative) and the winning player rolls on a table to affect the terrain. This allows any careful placement to be challenged! In our case I ended up with exactly the battlefield I wanted. I think this was mainly to do with Steve’s error in ensuring there was nothing in his table half to impede his warbands.
I took my a version of my standard EIR army, perfectly honed for killing savages:

**COMMAND**
General and 2 sub-commanders

**CORE**
2 auxiliary infantry units of 16 men each – upgraded to be javelin armed and drilled
2 units of 16 legionaries
1 unit of 12 veteran legionaries

**SUPPORT**
2 units of 12 auxiliary cavalry – drilled and armed with javelins and throwing spears
1 unit of 10 auxiliary archers

**SKIRMISH**
10 javelinmen

Total Points – 2498

The savage barbarians had four big warbands, a smaller fanatic warband, a unit of chariots, a small light cavalry force and 3 units of skirmishers.

**COMMAND**
General and 2 sub-commanders

**CORE**
3 units of 32 warriors
1 unit of 28 warriors
1 unit of 24 fanatics

**SUPPORT**
1 unit of 8 light chariots
1 unit of 6 light cavalry

**SKIRMISH**
1 unit of 10 javelinmen
2 units of 12 slingers

Total Points – 2500
With the battlefield of my choosing and with command of the approaches as the barbarian savages began to emerge (from Steve’s carrying case), I decided to send a unit of cavalry and a tribune on a flank march.

With the pre-game stage over, it was onto deployment. Mine was pretty standard, the infantry in two lines protected by fields to the left and copses of trees to the right. A column of cavalry deployed far to the right along with my skirmishers.

The British deployed in a long line across the centre with the bulk of their skirmishers on their left and chariots on their right accompanied by light cavalry and slingers. Following deployment, I changed my mind about the skirmishers and redeployed them (thanks to my tribune’s Tactician trait) amongst the fields on my left to harass his chariots.

Steve’s plan was to charge headlong and overwhelm my centre before my cavalry could influence the battle. His warbands were very powerful and capable of overrunning the auxiliaries.

My plan was simple. The cavalry on my right would swing round the copses of trees under enemy sling fire and attack the barbarians from the rear. My flanking force on the left would enter the fray deep into the enemy rear and attack them from the other side.

The key was the ability of the auxiliaries to hold for a couple of turns. To bolster them, I put the veteran legionaries in the front line with two units of legionaries providing rear support. Armed with long spears and javelins, the auxiliaries would stand their ground and their support would be in a position to relieve them if the pressure became too much to bear.
I allowed the savages to commence the battle and the first 2 turns saw him pelt my cavalry on the right while my skirmishers killed a few of his fanatic warriors. Slingers on my left fired ineffectively against my bowmen in the fields.

The hordes approached with much noise and ill intent hoping to intimidate me. Steve held his light cavalry back, aware of the flanking march against his right. The British warlord opted to throw his chariots forward in the hope of sweeping my veterans away.

Turn 3 saw the blood start to flow. Two warbands attacked the auxiliaries as the chariots charged headlong into my veteran legionaries. The auxiliaries did well, holding in one fight and actually winning on my right. The veterans were hit hard and were forced to fall back. With the impact of the British charge absorbed, the auxiliaries set about their grisly work, efficiently dispatching barbarians to join their savage gods. With their warlord bellowing his encouragement nearby, his sword sweeping in wide circles above his head, they held their courage.
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As the Roman cavalry closed in for the kill, the venerable warlord charged into the fray. He had little impact on the fighting. Wading in amongst his men, a centurion of the auxilia killed him with a single thrust of his blade. As his sons gathered him to the rear to die, the warband on my right broke and my disciplined men moved to threaten the British centre. The chariots had lost their impetus, the warriors duelling ineffectively against their Roman betters. My flanking cavalry routed the enemy light horse, despite significant casualties, as those on the right finished off a unit of foot skirmishers and pursued a fleeing warband.
One warband, yet unblooded, and seeing their general dying decided that was enough and headed for home. Those remaining fought with courage and honour. The tribune and his cavalry were chased off the field by infantry. Trapped to their rear, the British chariots had nowhere to retreat and were annihilated. Hit in the flank, the fanatics broke after a good fight.

The British army was broken and effectively destroyed and Steve conceded the battle. We totted up the points and the result was a “Crushing Victory” for the Romans.
A triumph would surely be awarded for my annihilation of the rebellious barbarians! It was all down to the ability of the auxiliaries, with a dose of luck, to hold against the first charge. This enabled my troops to force the enemy back giving me enough time manoeuvre my cavalry and light troops to trap the them.

Below: overview on turn 3.
Thanks for reading and, if you want to know more through, get in touch with us through our websites, the Clash of Empires yahoo group, our forum at http://rofe.19.forumer.com/index.php., or the Wargaming Ancient Battles (WAB) forum.

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