In this article I am going to give an overview of a recent battle played using the Clash of Empires rules. Fortunately for the reader, time and space mean I will keep it as brief as I can while giving you a flavour of how CoE works.

Darryl Morton of Faction Wars and I are regular opponents for Clash of Empires with many of our games involving Greeks against Persians. For this battle I was using a Spartan version of the Later Hoplite Greek list that is available to download from our website at clashofempires.co.uk.

Darryl was using our Early Achaemenid Persian list which will be available from mid-April. Both of these lists are currently undergoing a massive review by a separate writing team to be published in our first book of army lists covering the Persian Wars to the death of Alexander, due out in August.

We enjoy playing games with a little narrative and the pre-battle setup for a Clash of Empires game helps us set the scene. In brief, these are the pre-battle steps:

1/ Determine any character traits for generals and sub-commanders

Character traits personalise your command models and can introduce advantages and disadvantages when you set the scenario or when you deploy your troops. My general rolled Companions giving him a bodyguard of loyal retainers which would help prevent him dying in combat. In the list, most Greek officers are Heroic Leaders meaning they fight in the phalanx.

Darryl rolled Heroic Leader for his general, perfectly apt for a courageous and noble Persian satrap pursuing marauding Greeks in Ionia! My sub-commanders’ traits had no effect on set-up but Darryl’s single sub-commander was a Tactician, making him a more reliable leader for a flank march.

2/ Next we determined which side held the initiative for the set-up. With his higher strategy rating and greater proportion of cavalry, Darryl won the roll easily.

3/ With the initiative, Darryl determined the climate and amount of terrain. Choosing just 1 terrain piece meant that I could choose a maximum of 2 pieces, so we ended up with a couple of fields and a ruin.

4/ Once placed, players can try to force a shift in the terrain placement. I wanted to shift the ruin and one of the fields but lost the dice off to Darryl who was happy with their positions.

Stuart McCorquodale – Greek General

I experimented a bit with my army choice:

**COMMAND**

General and 2 sub-commanders

**CORE**

3 hoplite phalanxes of 24 men each – upgraded with light armour and increased Morale and Discipline.

1 Spartan phalanx of 18 men – light armour

‘I too shall lie in the dust when I am dead, but now let me win noble renown.’

Stuart McCorquodale – Greek General
SUPPORT
1 unit of 24 mercenary peltasts – drilled and armed with long spears
1 unit of 10 Greek medium cavalry

SKIRMISH
13 Slingers
13 Javelinmen

Total Points – 2487

Be a lion at home and a fox abroad.
PERSIAN PROVERB

Darryl Morton – Persian Satrap

COMMAND
1 Satrap and 1 sub-commander

CORE
2 units of 10 Persian cavalry with bows
2 units of 8 Persian cavalry with bows
28 Persian Infantry – 21 armed with bows, 7 with spara and spear

My command elements were all deployed with units as they have the Heroic Leader trait

I wasn’t dealt the best hand with the terrain so I planned my battle around it. Darryl has learned to respect the phalanx so I fully expected him to hold back and attempt to envelop me with his cavalry. But I had a decent sized unit of cavalry and a big one of peltasts.

I expected the peltasts to be able to handle any single Persian cavalry unit quite capably, but I expected the Greek horse to only be able to hold the barbarians for a short while. Both of these units would combine to secure my right flank while my Spartan phalanx, in the place of honour on the right, would march straight to the Persian foot and push them from the battlefield.

Being very worried about a Persian flanking march on my right, my left was weak. Fortunately, the terrain had given me a field just ahead of my deployment area that would give me security as long as my skirmishers could hold it. I fully expected the Persian cavalry to avoid this area and use foot skirmishers to capture it.

So, it would be a race to crush the Persian centre before the expected strong Persian cavalry attack around my right flank, and a prayer to the gods that skirmishers and a field could provide enough time for the battle to be won before the inevitable breakthrough of barbarian cavalry around my left and into the rear of the phalanx.

Now let’s have a look at the barbarians.
SUPPORT
2 units of 16 armoured Immortals

SKIRMISH
1 unit of 10 javelinmen

A wide open plain suited my cavalry-heavy army well giving me lots of room for manoeuvre. This would allow me to utilise my horses in a number of roles.

Two units in the centre were to draw the phalanxes in, slowly giving ground and supported by the spara and Immortals.

On the right flank, the Satrap and his mounted retinue would advance forward to outflank the Greeks supported by javelinmen. On my left, I sent a flanking force of cavalry to complete a double envelopment of the phalanx – I expected that though it may be difficult to encircle the Greek barbarians on both sides, but that it would be likely that one flank would be broken through.

I would need to keep my infantry out of harm’s way until they could benefit from the outflanking cavalry. It was unlikely that even the Immortals could match the Spartans but I was confident they could hold out against the rest of the phalanx until the cavalry arrived.

DEPLOYMENT

We played the Pitched Battle scenario. In a future article I will concentrate on the whole aspect of pre-game set up and scenarios. As the Persians had the initiative the Greeks deployed their skirmishers first, followed by the Persian javelinmen. Then the Greek heavy infantry and cavalry were placed in a continuous line followed by the Persian heavies. Finally the Greek light infantry deployed followed by the three units of Persian cavalry (one unit was off table on a flank march).
TURN 1

The Persians kicked off with a cavalry advance accompanied by missile fire that caused a couple of casualties. On the Persian right, the Satrap’s cavalry advanced covered by skirmishers. In reply the Greek javelins advanced to the vines to head off the barbarian skirmishers. Knowing that I had to take the battle by the scruff of the neck, the phalanx marched in a straight line toward the enemy centre. In CoE, phalanxes are unmanoeuvrable; once you deploy them that’s the place they will operate for the whole game. I had all of this in mind, knowing that I would be defenceless if the Persians penetrated into my rear area.

END OF TURN 1

TURN 2

The first act of the turn was for the Persian skirmishers to charge into combat with the Greek javelinmen who opted to hold their position and fire. Skirmishers are usually unable to do anything but evade or flee against enemy formed troops but are permitted to stand against unformed enemy.

The Persian infantry, comprising two units of Immortals and a unit of sparabara held their nerve and their position on the start line, whilst the cavalry in front executed a tactical withdrawal laying down missile fire as they went. The Satrap’s cavalry continued their flanking manoeuvre.

Persian ranged fire again struggled to penetrate the phalanx managing only to kill 2 hoplites, including a Spartan.
In the ensuing combat, the barbarians got the better of the freedom loving Greeks, winning by 1 point. In CoE, the loser in a combat must check their morale by rolling 2D6. The number they lost the combat by is added to the score and compared to their ML (Morale) score. If the total is equal to or lower than their ML, they pass and are pushed back. If it is failed, we consult the Combat Outcomes table for what happens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fail by</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Push back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Retreat and disrupted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Broken and flee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>Broken and flee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+</td>
<td>Destroyed or dispersed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Losing by 1 point, the Greeks checked their ML and rolled 5. Adding 1 (the amount they lost combat by) gave a result of 6. With a paltry ML characteristic of 5, the Greeks lost by 1 resulting in “Retreat and disrupted”. This means they had to retreat a full move away from the Persians and were disrupted. Disruption reduces your fighting capabilities and forces you to check ML before you can charge. The Persians opted not to follow up and passed their DL (Discipline) test to restrain pursuit.

Play changed over to the Greeks and the phalanx continued their march forward. Worried about the imminent collapse of my javelins, the Greek cavalry managed to execute a marching wheel manoeuvre to cover (centre of picture). The peltasts continued to cover my far right with the Persian flanking force still not in sight.
Darryl opened his turn by again ordering a charge against the Greek javelins. At the end of his Orders Phase, he diced to see if his flanking force was ready to arrive. He passed the test and placed a marker to show which flank they would arrive on in his following turn. I had placed my peltasts wisely! The Immortals and Sparabara successfully manoeuvred to widen this gap drawing the phalanxes in further, all the while laying down fire from their bows. The Spara retreated behind a vineyard to give them protection from a frontal assault by the Spartans. The central cavalry units turned tail, preparing to peel of from in front of the phalanx.

In the Hand-to-hand Phase, the Persians won the combat by 4 points to 1 (3 casualties plus enemy disrupted to 1 casualty). Rolling 8 for their test, plus 3 for the amount they lost combat by, gave a result of 11. Against their ML of 5 this meant the Greeks had lost the combat by a massive 6 points.

Consulting the Combat Outcomes table shows that it resulted in the Greek unit being destroyed and taken straight off the tabletop. The Persians opted to hold and (I guess) loot the bodies and kill the wounded!

Things were looking like they were on the edge of a knife. The Persian Satrap had a clear route to the rear of my left flank phalanx but that door was being closed by the redeployment of my cavalry.

On the right the Persian flanking force was seen in the distance (note the cavalry model used as a marker at the bottom of the picture) but the peltasts had them covered.

With the phalanxes in range to start engaging the Immortals, my new worry would be the manoeuvring of the Persian cavalry in the centre. I hung back with the left flank hoplites in an effort to hamper the movement of the enemy horse.
TURN 4

Following a flank march behind the Greek lines, the flanking force of Persian cavalry had entered the fray and rushed past the peltasts. The Satrap’s cavalry hesitated, firing their bows ineffectively against the Greek horse. With the cavalry in the centre manoeuvring to head out to the flanks, the Persian infantry continued to hold, inflicting a few more missile casualties.

The Persian manoeuvring would keep the phalanx at bay for just one more turn. The Greek cavalry was now in danger of being surrounded so doubled back to attack the reserve force and, with the peltasts, threaten them with envelopment.

END OF TURN 4

TURN 5

The Persian cavalry outmanoeuvred the Greek horse and managed, with the right-most Immortals, to effectively surround the phalanx on the Greek left. Frustratingly for the Spartans, vines conspired to keep the enemy sparabara out of their reach.

In the Greek Orders Phase, one phalanx of hoplites charged the Immortals in the Persian centre. The peltasts struggled to keep up with the dramatic and unfolding cavalry struggle in the rear of the Greek left flank. On the left of the phalanx battleline, the hoplites were in imminent danger of being hit in the flank and front at the same time, with the additional possibility of the Satrap’s cavalry charging from behind. This would have spelt the end for the Greek left, so I opted to attempt a complex manoeuvre in a vain hope of saving them. With a high likelihood of failure, I managed to beat the odds and form a square - this formation removes all flanks and rear of the formation but at a price of losing the advantages normally afforded by the phalanx formation.
The Greek slingers finally got into action, dispatching 2 archers from the sparabara. In the combat involving the hoplites and Immortals both sides inflicted 2 casualties and, with their other combat resolution factors being the same, the fight ended in a draw.

Forming a square made the Persians hesitate so they launched every arrow they could, inflicting grievous losses. One key disadvantage of being in a square is that enemy ranged attacks get a bonus to hit. With 7 dead, the hoplites failed their ML test by one. As a square does not retreat, they ended up with a disruption marker.
The tricky manoeuvring of the Persian horse in the centre had put the phalanx into disarray. Unable to manoeuvre, one cavalry unit (previous photo, just out of shot above the sparabara on the right) prepared to charge the flank of the centre right phalanx. Combat between the hoplites and Immortals ended in another draw in the Persian turn.

In the Greek Orders Phase, the Spartans charged the sparabara on my right and I launched my last desperate attempt to save my ragged left flank. With an imminent assault being readied on the square, the Greek cavalry heroically charged the Satrap's cavalry.

The Immortals and hoplites again ended their fight in stalemate, with 3 dead per side. The Spartans started carving their way through the spara, winning the combat by 3 points. As I feared, the Greek cavalry were not up to taking on the Satrap's guard and lost by 2 points.

All morale tests for combat are taken after the Hand-to-hand Phase in the Combat Outcomes Phase. The sparabara surprisingly passed but the Greek cavalry were forced to retreat and became disrupted. The Persians were poised to deliver the death blow...

The Greek cavalry engage with the Satrap's bodyguard at the rear of the Greek left flank. The hoplites in square formation can just be seen at the top of the picture.
I could see the bloodlust in Darryl’s eyes as his cavalry and Immortals charged the beleaguered square who prepared to sell their lives dearly, encouraged by rousing words from the xenagos leading the brave remaining men. In the centre, another exposed phalanx was exposed to a flank attack. Almost the entirety of both forces was now locked in combat.

In the Hand-to-hand Phase, the Spartans (exhausted by their long march across the table) surprisingly lost combat narrowly, due to the weight of numbers of the Median barbarians. The Persian central cavalry narrowly beat the phalanx from the flank. The epic fight between the phalanx and Immortals took its toll on the Eastern barbarians, with them losing by 3. The square took a pounding, losing by 3 points. Amazingly, despite being disrupted and facing a superior foe, the Greek cavalry killed 2 Persians for the loss of 1 man and drew the combat.

The game was down to the wire. Combat Outcomes from right to left were: Spartans passed their ML; Greek phalanx failed by 1 and was disrupted; the Immortals (with their Steady unit special rule) managed to hold; the square needed a 4 or less on 2 dice and made it!

Unfortunately, the inspiring xenagos leading the square was killed. Characters don’t actually fight themselves but just contribute extra dice to combat. However, if a unit suffers enough losses in combat, there is a chance he will be killed. These are always very tense and fun moments and Darryl’s cheering filled the room! I had a chance to kill the Satrap but failed to Darryl’s relief.

The only thing for the Greeks to do in the final Orders Phase of the game was to charge the peltasts into the Satrap’s cavalry. It was only the retreat of the Greek cavalry earlier that had enabled them to get into charge range. So, again from right to left, straight to the fighting.

The Spartans only managed a draw, again thanks to the weight of barbarian numbers. The Persian cavalry flanking the centre right phalanx won by a margin of 4-0. The Immortals now horrific casualties gave the Greeks a 4-1 advantage. The square was pummelled by the combination of cavalry and fresh Immortals, losing by 9 points to 1!
With half of my phalanx on the verge of collapse, the battle was lost. But my brave and heroic cavalry, supported by the sheer weight of numbers of peltasts, fought with a savagery and courage that would have impressed even noble Achilles, narrowly beating the Satrap’s cavalry by a single point.

It was the final Combat Outcomes Phase of the game and it could not be closer. The phalanx in my centre, flanked by enemy cavalry, collapsed. The few Immortals left in the centre broke. The hoplites in square had almost no chance and were destroyed. But the Satrap’s cavalry, stunned by the ferocity of the Greeks and demoralised by the charge of the peltasts, broke.

Panic spread throughout the battlefield as the air filled with the screams of the dying. The routing of the Persian general swept away their neighbouring compatriots to their right (left of picture).

With the final phase of the game, Darryl had lost his general, one unit of Immortals and 2 units of cavalry. I had lost 2 units of hoplites, my javelins and the heroic xenagos. Counting the victory point total the final tally was:

| Greeks 123 VP’s | Persians: 95 VP’s |

A marginal victory for the freedom loving men of Greece against the servants of the despotic Persian Empire! Not a legendary victory, but laced with legendary moments. The work done by my protectors, the peltasts and the over achieving Greek cavalry was the high point.

Darryl bemoaned his bad luck with morale tests but was satisfied with the performance of his men. Perhaps he could have been more decisive with his flanking forces but I did a good job of delaying them with limited resources.

Thanks for reading (and well done for getting this far) and get in touch with us if you want to know more through our websites, the Clash of Empires yahoo group or our forum at http://rofe.19.forumer.com/index.php.

Clash of Empires is released in April priced £25.