

BATTLE REPORT OF A CONQUERORS AND KINGS GAME BY MAD ROB

Conquerors and Kings

An evening with the rule writer (1998)

I have played a fair amount over ancient wargames over the years, WRG 6th and 7th edition, DBA and DBM. Invited by the leading light of the Rules for The Common Man team, Martin Goddard of Peter Pig to join him for a game, I jumped at the chance.

The Conquerors and Kings rule set is a variation of the Square Bashing System, with the board being divided into squares which are designated as either "open" or "closed". The units of your army are deployed with a maximum of ten in any square. They fight against enemy units in adjacent squares. Because of this layout, there is no measuring to move units. They move from square to square, and they can be set up by the General in any formation that looks pretty. "The movement is fairly straight forward" said Martin, "infantry move one square per turn and cavalry two". That did sound straight forward, even I would be able to handle that. "However", said Martin ",as with real armies, although you can tell them to do something, they may not do it immediately (or indeed at all)". You have to roll dice if you want to do anything other than move straight forward and that includes leaving closed terrain.. You will find that skirmishers can move pretty freely, but that bodies of close order troops have more difficulty in performing complex manoeuvres. At that he produced a bucketful of six sided dice and said "We'll be needing these".

The two armies he had prepared were Imperial Romans and Early Germans. "These are the my two demonstration armies I take around the shows". There are loads of Germans, but the Romans make up for their lack of numbers by having a better armour save. I have also beefed them up a bit for tonight, the Germans have got some extra cavalry and I have added a couple of bolt engines to the Romans, which will be handy if they are the defender. Which would you like"?

I am a great believer of victory through technology so I opted for the Romans. These had been beautifully painted by Dave Marcroft, there being eight cohorts of legionaries (a field legion), three of maxilla, two units of archers and two of

skirmishing cavalry, together with the bolt engines and two general bases. Each unit consisted of four bases of troops, each 3cm x 3cm. As I marshalled them out of the box, I noticed that Martin was pouring forth a veritable horde of Germans. "How many have you got?" I asked. "Oh, 15 ordinary warbands, one elite, four units of foot skirmishers, including some veterans and two units of noble (veteran) cavalry supported by some mounted skirmishers. But they are not very good!" he added.

First off we need to determine who is the attacker, and we play a short dice game to determine that said Martin. After rolling to see who went first we took it in turns to attempt to reach 34 on the dice. You can stop at any time and put the current turns score in the bank, but any rolls of 6 mean you are bust for that turn and lose all your score except that which is in the bank. I went first and put 14, then 11, then 8 and finally 4 in the bank taking me over the 34 point threshold. Martin, being an impetuous warband type general attempted to roll the 34 straight through each time and invariable went bust. "Oh well, that means I am defending" said Martin.

"Next we need to determine the number of closed squares", said Martin. "The defender throws a die but before he does so says whether he wants to add or subtract one from the result. As I want something resembling the Tutorburger Wald, I will add one" and then he promptly threw a six. "That means that seven of the squares are closed and I will choose two hills, three woods and two villages". He then laid these out. The table consisted of a green felt cloth with the corners of the squares marked on, seven across by five deep. "I thought that looked better than a ruled grid" said Martin as he laid out the closed squares, most of which he put in line across the middle of the table. "Now the attacker can try and adjust the terrain. Throw a die for any of the squares you choose and a 1 or 2 will move it forward or back, a 3 or 4 left or right and a five or six will leave it where it is." After a bit of rolling I managed to clear a two square wide channel in the middle, there being two villages and a wood on the left and two hills and two woods on the right.

"Now we deploy" said Martin, "the stacking limit for a square, including generals is 10 and you must have a total of ten units in the middle two squares." Because there were so few Roman units this did not leave much scope for a marvellous tactical deployment so deployed the entire army in the centre two squares. Martin deployed the mass of Germans on my right behind the hills and

woods with the cavalry on the extreme right. "Because I am defending and we start with armies of equal points, I must now roll to lose some units to give you the edge", said Martin. "I roll for half of my veteran and ordinary units rounded up and any that score 5 or 6 are removed from the game." As Martin had twenty four units not counting his elites and generals he rolled for twelve and lost 5. Of course he did not risk his veterans so five ordinary warbands were removed.

"You can now redeploy some units or send some on a flank march if you wish so long as you still comply with the deployment conditions." With so few units I decided to decline this offer. "I am now allowed to send troops forward to seize key terrain features. I can deploy up to five units but must risk them and lose them on a roll of 1." With that, Martin rolled for five units and scoring a single one, he pushed a few warbands and skirmishers led by a General into the wood on my left. "The unit that threw a one has got lost but may rejoin my army latter" said Martin.

"Now we can begin, each turn we throw for the initiative and being the attacker you add one to your score."

Turn one. German initiative. The Germans advanced out of the wood on my left arriving on my base line. The main bulk of the army advanced forward (weren't the Germans supposed to be defending?) with the cavalry racing down the right flank. As the Germans had arrived in the square adjacent to half my army I resolved to attack them. You have to roll to move your troops side ways and close order troops need a 4+. Any units that fail can have a second go if there is a general in the square. I was able to muster an impressive attack, but Martin just smirked and said "I am not fighting that lot" and promptly fled back into the wood. I fired the bolt engines at them as they had a range of two squares but with no luck (they needed a six to hit).

Turn two. Roman initiative. I moved my right hand square straight forward and kept my left where it was. A classic Roman chequer board formation, only on a larger scale! The German cavalry kept coming down the right flank while the rest of the German warbands struggled forward through the hills and woods. Being close order troops they needed to roll to leave a square of closed terrain and this had the effect of spreading them out. I had the same problem with my bolt engines, needing a six to move them the ones in the right hand square were left behind. However, I did fire them and scored a hit. There being no saving throw for fire from bolt engines Martin replaced one of his stands with a body.

In the morale phase each square with bodies in it had to throw a die for each one, 4+ being a fail (Martin said that this was so I could not complain I had thrown low dice all night). Veterans or elites in the square would cancel a test (steady the men) and a general in the square would cancel a fail (which is better than cancelling a test). Martin took the test (having no veterans) and failed and having no general in that square the units in it were stuck for a turn.

Turn three. Roman initiative. The Romans continued to advance but pushed their auxillia out to the right to fend off the rapidly approaching German cavalry. The Germans kept coming forward and the cavalry kept advancing, ending their move adjacent the auxillia. The Romans scored four hits with their archers and the German skirmishers three (throwing fives and sixes). Now came a tactical part of the game. When any hits are scored it is important to see who gets them. The person who has scored the hits wants them on the troops with the worst save and the owner wants them on the troops with the best save. Once you have scored hits you can allocate them if you can throw a 5+. This means that usually the owner can allocate them but occasionally the attacker can. Neither of us was able to allocate the hits and as a result we both obtained a kill (skirmishers have a good save against bow fire). The Romans passed their morale tests but the German cavalry did not, meaning they could not attack the auxillia next turn.

Turn four. German initiative. The Germans assaulted my left hand square with five warbands, they were also able to assault from behind with those troops who had started off forward. When the Romans moved they assaulted with the auxillia into the wood immediately ahead of them, which contained a few skirmishers and two warbands. For each assault the attacker and defender consult a table on which various factors are laid out. Each close order unit in good going get three, there are bonuses for units supporting at the rear of the square, if the opposition has no skirmishers, if you have flank or rear support etc. If a General is in the square attacking he counts +1 if he directs the attack from the rear or +3 if he fights in the front rank If he does fight then he is at risk and dies if the enemy throws a six. For each four points you get a die. 3-5 gives a hit, a 6 a double hit and a 1-2 a miss. Thus the decision on the General usually depends if the extra plus two will give you an additional dice.

In their attack the German General fought in the front rank and survived and the Germans inflicted five hits and the Romans three. Despite having a better save as they were armoured the Romans lost three bases and the Germans one. This

meant the Germans had won and because the Romans had enemy behind them they could not fall back. The winner is entitled to inflict extra kills (for which there is no save) to simulate the carnage of a pursuit. If you can't fall back, not surprisingly this is even worse. As a result they were able to kill three additional bases. The Roman assault on the wood went equally badly. Each side inflicted one hit, but the Roman died and the German saved, in the resulting repulse of the attack a further five Roman bases were killed. In the first square the Romans had six morale tests. Veterans in the square squashed one. Two of these were failed and the General negated one of these being that the Romans could not leave the square next turn. The auxillia were even worse off. They had seven tests and failed three. They had to fall back and each unit had to roll to see if it would break. Unfortunately three units broke (threw a five or six) and were removed from play.

Turn five. Roman initiative. The main Roman square on the right now had to do some thing and elected to attack side ways into the wood at the warband moving through it. Most of the units succeeded in making the move with those few laggards lining the back of the square in support. The Germans came rushing out of the wood to try and finish off the auxillia with the aid of the cavalry and continued to press there attack on the left.

In the Roman attack they scored three hits but the General died fighting in the front rank and the Germans saved two of them. In return the Germans inflicted two hits but the Romans saved them both. The Romans then inflicted four extra kills. On the left the Germans who were at the front and the side of the square again won but their General also died in the front rank. With no retreat the Roman body count was rising rapidly. In their attack on the auxillia the Germans inflicted two hits one of which was converted into a kill. The Romans inflicted one hit which the Germans saved. For extra kills the Germans managed to pile up another seven bodies. On the left the Romans had ten tests and failed four and as they could not fall back received four more casualties but amazingly no units broke, obviously they had decided to fight to the last man!

Turn six. German initiative. The Germans piled everything into the beleaguered Romans on the left. The Romans followed up their success by putting in an attack with their middle square. The German general led the charge on the left and died heroically. How true it is that war is a good time for promotion. The

Germans then suffered a turn of their luck. Having overwhelming force they had seven dice, achieved three hits and the Romans saved them all. The Romans then managed to achieve one kill winning the fight. This took the pressure off them. The Romans also won the fight where they were at the advantage. The round of morale tests left all the German forces except the cavalry pinned down for the next turn.

The countdown score which had been diminishing each turn was now down to 3, obviously the sun was very low on the horizon.

Turn seven. German initiative. With all the German forces pinned down except the cavalry, this was a quiet turn with German cavalry sweeping away the Roman bolt engines, and the Romans pressing on toward the German baseline (camp). There was an exchange of skirmish fire but no casualties scored. When the countdown dice was thrown a four meant the game was over.

The aftermath. "Now we need to decide who has won" said Martin. After the battering the Romans had received I thought this was fairly obvious, but no, there was a special table to go through, which represented how the battle seen by your higher command/tribe etc. The defender got points for units destroyed or routed, units weakened, Generals killed, holding the line of squares in front of their camp and a point each for the units lost at deployment. To this was added the roll of a die.

The attacker gets points for units destroyed, occupying the defenders base line square (i.e. adjacent his camp), flank squares and for killing his Generals, together with the roll of a die.

The victory scores were: -

Germans /Romans

Die roll 2 3

Units destroyed 6 x 3 18 Units destroyed 15

Units weakened 3 -

Generals Killed 8 6

2nd row squares 2 Flank squares -

Units lost at deployment 5 Camp squares 8

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Total 38"" 32

This meant the result was declared as a narrow German victory. It took just less than two hours to play, excluding the time spent setting up.

The thing I liked about these rules which I have seen in few others, is the way the battle went one way then the other and back again. Usually, you get the upper hand, keep applying the pressure and the game goes the same way.

By Rob Roriston (1998)

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