

HISTORICAL REFIGHT 2: THE BATTLE OF CANNAE 216BC

*Note this series of refights is not intended to cover all the relevant history, but rather to put such history into a ready form for a **Mortem et Gloriam** refight. There are numerous sources that are available to read about the real battle, both online and in print, to which we refer people for fuller background information. Have fun.*

ESSENTIAL OVERVIEW

On 2nd August 216 BC **Hannibal** won his most famous victory: the envelopment at the **Battle of Cannae** that has been studied at military colleges for hundreds of years. By this stage of the campaign Hannibal had a veteran force that had fought its way through Northern Italy, winning victories at Trebia (218 BC) and Lake Trasimene (217 BC). He was now in central Italy and threatening the Roman heartlands. Not one of the famed war elephants that crossed the Alps remained - but his Gallic and Spanish troops were by now well drilled in the art of manoeuvre and warfare.

Rome sent a large force out to destroy **Hannibal** under the leadership of **Paulus** and **Varro**. It was far from a weak force, comprising Legio 1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. Most of these troops were well trained and experienced. The Romans also had a reasonable amount of reasonable quality allied cavalry attached to their army.

The Romans were also far from foolish in choosing the place of battle. The Cannae plain was wide enough to deploy their strong infantry force, but was protected on the wings by tricky hills and the River Aufidius. They established a fortified camp and it is generally viewed that they manned it with the Triarii third line from the Legions. They had a smaller camp on the same side of the river as the battle. The hills and river gave some protection from a proper encirclement. The battle was fought on the opposite side of the river to the two main camps (with the Roman having a smaller camp for immediate supplies on the same side to the rear).

The Carthaginians held the advantage in mounted troops with around 6000 Spanish and Gallic warriors who had fought through previous campaigns, and a contingent of around 4000 of the much feared Numidians. The Roman strategy was clear: use the Legions to bust a hole through the centre of the Carthaginian army and have the Roman cavalry fight a defensive battle to buy time to allow this to succeed. The basic Carthaginian plan was equally obvious - to destroy the flanks and fall on the rear of the Legions before they could break through.

Hannibal however added some genius to change the odds of these plans. He deployed his Gallic and Spanish warriors in a form of crescent to engage the Legions early and then intended to pull off the difficult manoeuvre of falling back with his infantry line to draw the Romans forward. This risky exercise - a fighting withdrawal is about as risky as it gets - would buy time, and the Romans would have little choice but to keep pressing and trying to make their initial plan succeed. It would take a great deal of skill to pull off such an unusual plan, and his willingness to attempt it gives us the sense that he had faith and confidence in his veteran troops. As history records, the plan was a success, a Roman army of 50,000 men was largely destroyed, and the gates of Rome were open to attack.

Many have said that Hannibal showed his tactical genius that day, but also showed some strategic naivety thereafter. He paused after the battle and allowed Rome to recover; possibly thinking Rome would come for peace. But Rome generally reacting to a loss by preparing for a win and that was one of its great strengths.

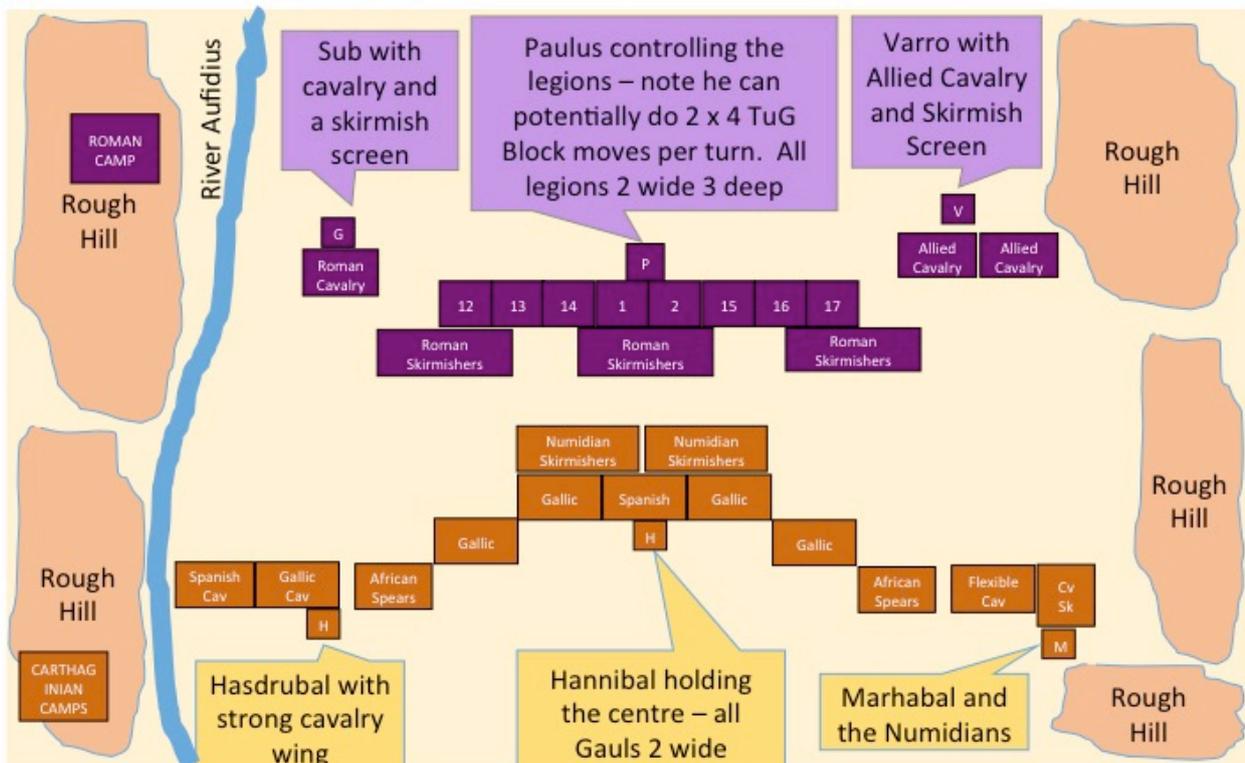
It is quite likely that Hannibal could have besieged and taken the city and brought Rome to its knees. His delay led to a long containment in Italy, a return to Africa and ultimately allowed the Roman hero Scipio (later Africanus for his defeat of Hannibal) to return from Spain, build a strong army, and in defeat Hannibal completely at the Battle of Zama in 202BC.

BATTLEFIELD

The centre of the table should be an open plain with large rough hills on both flanks and the river Ausfidius should be a 3BW width river. The Roman camp should be double normal size and comes with an attached TuG of Triarii to hold and threaten that flank. The map below gives a guide to both the battlefield and deployment.

For those wanting to play the scenario without following the historical plan it is reasonable - given that battle is on the far side of the river from the camps - to assume the river is crossable. Treat the river as *Difficult Going* and with *Defensible Banks* (a +1 in combat). So if you want to experiment with moving troops around that flank over the river feel free to do so. However my testing suggests that this battle is all about timing and to do so will not benefit either party much.

CANNAE: DEPLOYMENT



THE ARMY OF HANNIBAL BARCA

CANNAE: HANNIBAL BARCA

ARMY		DATE	ALLIES		PBS Terrain Maps		MORTEM ET GLORIAM		Player	Contact Details										
Hannibal at Cannae		216BC			Plains															
C-in-C and Sub Generals																				
General	Name	Type	Ally?	Pts	C&C Cards	<table border="1"> <tr> <th colspan="2">Set up modifiers</th> </tr> <tr> <td>PBS MAP CARDS</td> <td>9 cards</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SCOUTING CARDS</td> <td>5 cards</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TuGs to Break</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Points total</td> <td>14616</td> </tr> </table>					Set up modifiers		PBS MAP CARDS	9 cards	SCOUTING CARDS	5 cards	TuGs to Break	5	Points total	14616
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SCOUTING CARDS	5 cards																			
TuGs to Break	5																			
Points total	14616																			
C in C	Hannibal Centre	Legendary Professional	na	1400	5															
Sub 1	Hasdrubal - Left	Talented Professional	no	700	4															
Sub 2	Marhabal - Right	Competent Professional	no	500	3															
Sub 3		na	no	0	0															
Version 1.0 July 2016																				
UG No	Name	Type	Training & Formation	Quality	Shooting	Protection	Weaponry		Special Characteristics			Number of bases	per base	Points Total	to break					
0	CAMP	CAMP	Formed Loose	Poor	NA	NA	NA	NA	Fortified Camp	A	B	C	3	91	273	2				
TuGs																				
1	Veteran African Spearmen	INFANTRY	Drilled Close	Superior	-	Protected	Long Spear	-	Shove	-	-	-	8	154	1232	4				
2	Veteran African Spearmen	INFANTRY	Drilled Close	Superior	-	Protected	Long Spear	-	Shove	-	-	-	8	154	1232	4				
3	Veteran Spanish	INFANTRY	Formed Flexible	Average	-	Protected	-	-	Devastating Chargers	Melee Expert	-	-	9	110	1170	5				
4	Veteran Gauls	INFANTRY	Formed Flexible	Average	Unkilled	Protected	-	-	Devastating Chargers	-	-	-	9	110	990	5				
5	Veteran Gauls	INFANTRY	Formed Flexible	Average	Unkilled	Protected	-	-	Devastating Chargers	-	-	-	9	110	990	5				
6	Veteran Gauls	INFANTRY	Formed Flexible	Average	Unkilled	Protected	-	-	Devastating Chargers	-	-	-	9	110	990	5				
7	Veteran Gauls	INFANTRY	Formed Flexible	Average	Unkilled	Protected	-	-	Devastating Chargers	-	-	-	9	110	990	5				
8	Galic Cavalry	CAVALRY	Formed Loose	Superior	Experienced	Protected	Short Spear	-	Melee Expert	-	-	-	6	196	1176	3				
9	Spanish Cavalry	CAVALRY	Formed Loose	Superior	Experienced	Protected	Short Spear	-	Melee Expert	-	-	-	4	196	784	2				
10	Numidian Cavalry	CAVALRY	Formed Flexible	Average	Experienced	Unprotected	Short Spear	Javelin	-	-	-	-	6	116	696	3				
SuGs, Artillery and Expendables																				
11	Numidian Cavalry Skirmishers	CAVALRY	Skirmisher	Average	Skilled	Unprotected	-	Javelin	-	-	-	-	6	88	528	2				
12	Numidian Infantry Skirmishers	CAVALRY	Skirmisher	Poor	Experienced	Unprotected	-	Javelin	-	-	-	-	9	54	482	3				
13	Numidian Infantry Skirmishers	CAVALRY	Skirmisher	Poor	Experienced	Unprotected	-	Javelin	-	-	-	-	9	54	482	3				
Generals		2600		TuGs		10523		SuGs		1493										

Note: This was the veteran force of Hannibal so all the Tribal troops are classified as Formed

- Hannibal's troops are of a high quality. His **African Spearmen** are graded **Superior**, and all the usually Tribal foot warriors are classified as **Formed**. You will see in the normal rules that Formed troops can **Break Off** from similar speed troops which represents just the type of fighting withdrawal Hannibal executed at Cannae. But it is not easy - so his **Legendary** status will be challenged to the full to pull it off.
- Hannibal has a larger and better quality mounted force than the Romans - two TuGs are **Superior**.
- The **Numidians** have one **Flexible** TuG which should operate in **Loose** formation and one of the very dangerous skirmishing SuGs who are **Skilled** shooters. The SuG will be using **GREEN** dice when shooting the Roman Cavalry!
- The command capacity of this army is high for three generals. Hannibal is **Legendary** with 5 cards, Hasdrubal is **Talented** with 4 and Marhabal **Competent** with 3. So a 12 card army with 12 UGs. You should be able to do a lot with that.

THE ROMAN ARMY AT CANNAE

CANNAE: PAULUS AND VARRO

ARMY		DATE	ALLIES		PBS Terrain Maps		MORTEM ET GLORIAM		Player	Contact Details						
Romans at Cannae		216BC			Plains											
C-in-C and Sub Generals							Set up modifiers									
General	Name	Type	Ally?	Pts	CRC Cards			PBS MAP CARDS	6 cards							
C-in-C	Paulus - Centre	Talented Professional	NA	1000	4			SCOUTING CARDS	3 cards							
Sub 1	Varro - Left	Competent Professional	no	500	3			TuGs to Break	6							
Sub 2	Right	Competent Professional	no	500	3			Points total	12458							
Sub 3		na	no	0	0											
Version 1.0 July 2016																
UG No	Name	Type	Training & Formation	Quality	Shooting	Protection	Weaponry	Special Characteristics			Number of bases	per base	Points Total	to break		
0	CAMP with Triarii	CAMP	Formed Loose	Superior	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	182	546	2		
TuGs																
1	Legion 1	INFANTRY	Drilled Close	Superior	-	Protected	Impact Weapon	-	Melee Expert	Shield Cover	-	6	182	546	3	
2	Legion 2	INFANTRY	Drilled Close	Superior	-	Protected	Impact Weapon	-	Melee Expert	Shield Cover	-	6	182	546	3	
3	Legion 12	INFANTRY	Drilled Close	Average	-	Protected	Impact Weapon	-	Melee Expert	Shield Cover	-	6	130	780	3	
4	Legion 13	INFANTRY	Drilled Close	Average	-	Protected	Impact Weapon	-	Melee Expert	Shield Cover	-	6	130	780	3	
5	Legion 14	INFANTRY	Drilled Close	Average	-	Protected	Impact Weapon	-	Melee Expert	Shield Cover	-	6	130	780	3	
6	Legion 15	INFANTRY	Drilled Close	Average	-	Protected	Impact Weapon	-	Melee Expert	Shield Cover	-	6	130	780	3	
7	Legion 16	INFANTRY	Drilled Close	Average	-	Protected	Impact Weapon	-	Melee Expert	Shield Cover	-	6	130	780	3	
8	Legion 17	INFANTRY	Drilled Close	Average	-	Protected	Impact Weapon	-	Melee Expert	Shield Cover	-	6	130	780	3	
9	Roman Cavalry - Right	CAVALRY	Formed Loose	Average	Experienced	Protected	Short Spear	-	Melee Expert	-	-	6	140	840	3	
10	Allied Cavalry - left	CAVALRY	Formed Flexible	Average	Experienced	Protected	Short Spear	-	Melee Expert	-	-	4	150	600	2	
11	Allied Cavalry - left	CAVALRY	Formed Flexible	Average	Experienced	Protected	Short Spear	-	Melee Expert	-	-	4	150	600	2	
SuGs, Artillery and Expendables																
13	Roman Skirmishers	INFANTRY	Skirmisher	Average	Experienced	Unprotected	-	Javelin	-	-	-	8	42	336	3	
14	Roman Skirmishers	INFANTRY	Skirmisher	Average	Experienced	Unprotected	-	Javelin	-	-	-	8	42	336	3	
15	Roman Skirmishers	INFANTRY	Skirmisher	Average	Experienced	Unprotected	-	Javelin	-	-	-	8	42	336	3	
Generals			2000		TuGs			9450		SuGs			1008			

Note: it generally thought that the Triarii were station in the camp hence it being fortified and upgraded to superior. Had they fought in the main battle the points would be more even. A additional single TuG of 6 Triarii Sup- Prot-Long Spear can operate within 4BW of the Roman camp.

- Paulus commanded the centre and this is made up of 8 **Legions**, two of which are graded **Superior**. All are **Melee Expert** and **Shield Cover** so they fight well in a drawn out melee and they can protect themselves from missile fire. Hannibal will need to defeat them in combat, and your legionaries can walk through most missile fire with minor loss.
- In front of the line are 3 SuGs of Roman skirmishers - the **Velites** and **Leves** of the army. These can screen the front of the army. One should go with each of the generals. They are in 8s and should be deployed 4 wide and 2 deep as an initial screen. They did not play a major part after the initial advance and you do not really want to get caught up in a slow SuG fight. Just walk through them when the time is right.
- There is a modest quantity of **Roman** and **Allied Cavalry** present. Generally allied cavalry tended to be better than Roman cavalry in this period. The Roman right has a single large TuG of **Average** troops and the left two smaller **Average** ones on their left flank.
- The **Triarii** third line had been used to defend the camp rather than act as a third line for the legion. The camp was therefore extremely strong and formed a secure point on the right flank. It is **Fortified** and **Superior**. A single TuG of 6 x Triarii is allowed (in addition to the army list above) to operate around it - within 4BW at all times. This represents the threat these troops would pose if any wide encirclement was attempted. These **Triarii** are **Superior - Protected - Long Spear**. They are allocated to the right flank command.
- The command ability of the army is far from poor. Paulus we rate as **Talented** and this allows him to potentially do two **Block Moves** each with 4 Legions and move the entire line of 8 each turn. Varro and the commander of the right wing



cavalry are both *Competent*. So a 10 card army itself with 11 TuGs to do the main work.

DEPLOYMENT

Use the map above and deploy the front lines of the army 12BW apart. If you are using the historical deployment just follow the map.

If you are using the troops and battlefield along but make your own deployment and plans then the Romans start deployment with their camp and 4 UGs.

The Romans are *Active* first.

FIGHTING THE BATTLE IN A HISTORICAL MANNER

For those who wish to try to re-enact the battle as we think it occurred, it is essentially a contest between Roman frontal power and Hannibal's ability to hold the centre long enough to overwhelm the flanks and return to crush the Roman Legions

As **Hannibal**:

- Gather quality cards while the Romans advance. You are going to need all of your cards to pull off your clever plan. This is essential.
- You will need to use cards to stop any *Forced Charges* by your central troops - so keep TuGs as a single block so you can do this as a *Block Halt* if you need to.
- Once the Roman line makes contact with your crescent make a break off move as soon as you can and accept the risk in *KaB* losses. Do this twice and your line will be back on the line of your African Spearman and you can start to turn the flanks of the Legions as happened in the real battle. With the **Gauls** and **Spaniards** in 9s and all your cards you should be able to soak up the casualties, but it might be close.
- You may need to use cards to *Recover Wounds* to ensure your centre lasts long enough, but don't do this at the expense of your *Break Off*.
- Once the Legions are engaged and drawn forward turn the **African Spearman** onto their flanks and work your way into the Roman line.
- On both flanks you should aim to overwhelm the Roman cavalry as quickly as possible. On average **Hasdrubal** should break through and be able to send one TuG to help the Numidians and one to fall on the rear of the Roman Legions. His *Talented* capability will be important to give him cards to make the wide sweeping manoeuvres necessary once he breaks through the Roman Cavalry.
- The Roman's facing your **Numidians** are more capable of holding the line if they can recover a few wounds, as you cannot fight them frontally until you weaken them with your javelins. So harass them with your Numidians as soon, and as much, as you can. You should grind them down but it will take time. You may end up having to fight with your **Flexibles** to hold them long enough for Hasdrubal to arrive. You need to keep your *Flexibles* in *Loose* formation so they cannot be driven away easily so make sure you only end up just within 2BW and *Run Away* with these if charged so that you do not get caught easily. Use your Numidian Skirmisher so they get Green dice any time the Romans charge them - this will hurt a lot.



As **Paulus**:

- There really is only one path open to you. All cards need to be used to smash the Carthaginians centre as quickly as possible. It was a good plan given the terrain chosen and I am sure they started the battle confident their Legions would carry the centre. Deploy 3 deep and 2 wide the all the Legions so they are very resilient. Keep pressing. Use your 4 TuG **Block Moves** to force troops into action as quickly as possible. If you can do this quickly the centre may well collapse.
- Remember you can pass through the skirmishers and drive the enemy ones away. Avoid a drawn out SuG fight in front of the line - it is not to your advantage.
- As the Carthaginians fall back you will find it difficult to do more than press directly forward. By all means try to wheel and protect your flanks better, but the reality is that you will then be pressing forwards much more slowly and this will usually play back into Hannibal's hands.
- Be careful with your cavalry to buy as much time as possible, falling back if need be. But of course you cannot fall back too much or the flank of the Legion line will in any case then become vulnerable to cavalry as they advance. Make sure you save cards to **Recover Wounds** - especially on the side facing the Numidians. You will need them to buy the time you need.

HAVE FUN. ad Mortem et Gloriam