

# *High Water Mark*

By Mike Elliott

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This set of rules is designed to enable large battles from the American Civil War to be played as a wargame. A key concept was that the Battle of Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863) should fit on a table area no more than 4ft square. To achieve a game that works at this level requires a considerable degree of abstraction. The basic unit is the division and individual bases are brigades.

The title "High Water Mark" is derived from the common saying that the deepest penetration of the Union lines by Pickett's charge at Gettysburg was the "high water mark" of the Confederacy.

These rules were originally published in *The Nugget*, the journal of Wargame Developments ( <http://www.wargamedevelopments.org/> )

## 2. SCALES AND CONCEPTS

### 2.1 Scales

The game is played on a hexagon gridded terrain (such as Hexon II from Kallistra Ltd.) The hexes are 4" across the sides. The ground scale is roughly 1 hex to 500yds and 1 turn is about 1 hour. The game is designed for 15mm figures, but you can use other scales provided they fit on the bases. The following base sizes are recommended:

Infantry 30mm * 20mm	each base represents a brigade of between 1500 to 2500 men
Cavalry 30mm * 40mm	each base represents a brigade
Artillery 30mm * 40mm	each base represents the artillery of a corps
Generals 30mm * 40mm	each base represents the general and his staff

The number of figures or models on a base is unimportant - just fit on as many as is comfortable and "looks right". However, as a guide, I would suggest 2 infantry or cavalry, 1 mounted general or 1 gun model in 15mm scale.

Cavalry are shown dismounted with their horses behind them on the same base. Cavalry of the period were really mounted infantry rather than true cavalry and usually dismounted to fight. This method of representation is intended to convey this and also to avoid the need for duplicate mounted and dismounted cavalry figures.

### 2.2 Organisation

The basic unit in the game is the division. (Hereafter, "unit" is another term for division.) There were regiments in the American Civil War, but over a period of time the strength of a regiment gradually reduced until the entire regiment could often only muster as many men as one or two full companies. For this reason, Civil War generals considered the brigade as the basic tactical formation. As casualties were suffered, under strength brigades could be merged to form new brigades or newly recruited regiments added to an existing brigade to bring it up to strength. In practice, the actual strength of a brigade could vary from about 500 men up to about 2500 men.

There are typically three brigades in a division. A cavalry brigade may be attached to an infantry division but could be organised into separate cavalry divisions. A corps is usually three divisions. Generals are required for each corps and for army command. Paint a white stripe along the rear edge of each general's base and write his name on it (or a code) so that you can tell who is who.

A division normally occupies a single hex, however it is possible to spread the bases of a division across multiple adjacent hexes if desired. Bear in mind though that the bases in a single hex are treated as a separate unit for purposes of combat resolution, so spreading out may be a disadvantage.

### 2.3 Quality and State of Units

The quality of a unit may be Raw, Average or Veteran. Raw troops can be marked with a green marker and Veteran troops with a red one (or with the markers provided). To randomly determine troop quality, roll **1D10** for each division on the following table:

	Raw	Average	Veteran
USA Infantry	0,1	2,3,4,5	6,7,8,9
Cavalry	0,1,2,3	4,5,6	7,8,9
CSA Infantry	0	1,2,3,4	5,6,7,8,9
Cavalry	-	0,1,2,3	4,5,6,7,8,9

Artillery attached to a division is the same quality as the division.

The state of a unit is shown in two ways, by casualties (indicated by the removal of bases) or by disorganisation (indicated by a marker). Once a unit has become disorganised, further disorganisation results have no effect. In other words, a unit can only have one disorganisation marker at any time. A good way of making disorganisation markers is to use a dead or wounded figure on a small base.

### 2.4 Equipment

Artillery may have either smooth bore or rifled guns. The equipment type of each unit is best indicated by a small marker placed by it. A set of markers (which may be photocopied and then stuck on to card) are supplied at the end of these rules.

The following is an optional rule that you can use to determine how a unit is equipped. Roll **1D10** and consult the following table:

Die	Artillery
1	Smooth bore
2	Smooth bore
3	Smooth bore
4	Smooth bore
5	Smooth bore
6	Smooth bore
7	Smooth bore
8	Rifled
9	Rifled
0	Rifled

### 2.5 Terrain

A word or two about terrain. Most American Civil War battlefields were relatively heavily wooded - at least in the Eastern theatre - so have lots of woods. Wooded areas can be represented by suitable model trees loosely placed on these areas so that they can be moved aside to make room for the troop bases. Roads in America were generally straighter than British roads. A good way of representing roads is to use 1" wide strips of bird cage sanded sheet.

Works are trenches which could be quite complex arrangements with cleared fields of fire in front and felled trees to impede an attackers progress. The representation of works is difficult because they are naturally below ground level. A suggested method is to use lengths of triangular shaped wood, painted a dull brown earth colour. This shape then represents the sloping glacis in front of the trenches. Troops placed behind the vertical face are considered to be in the works.

Built up areas are represented by 4" square pieces of brown or grey card with model buildings loosely placed on them. If possible, the buildings should be of a smaller scale than the figures. So for example, for 15mm figures, use 1/300 scale buildings. Most American towns are laid out on a grid

pattern and these squares add to that effect. As a guide to size, a small village would be represented by just one block, whereas a small town (say the size of Gettysburg) would consist of about three blocks. The important thing is the AREA covered on the table, not the number of buildings.

It will be noted that built up areas do not confer many combat advantages. This is simply because they were not a factor as regiments did not defend them. A handful of sharpshooters may have taken up position in such locations, but unlike WWII, built up areas were simply manoeuvred around and not fought over. The best example was the Union making no attempt whatsoever to utilize the buildings at Gettysburg for defence, nor the Confederates at Fredericksburg. Men occupying buildings could not be controlled like regiments formed in line of battle.

## 2.6 Other Eventualities

These rules cannot hope to cover every eventuality that might arise in play. If there is any doubt about interpretation of the rules and the players cannot agree, then an umpire should decide. If no umpire is available then toss a coin or something (if all else fails, you could resort to pistols at dawn ... on the other hand, perhaps not, duelling is now illegal!).

## 3. **TURN SEQUENCE**

Distribute a playing card to each division (except any with a Command Fail marker, see below) and unattached commander. Units activate in turn starting with the lowest card. When the unit has been activated remove the card. The card precedence is Ace low, Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades.

When a unit activates, it carries out one or more of the following actions in sequence:

1. Reorganisation and Command
2. Movement
3. Firing
4. Melee

When all units have been activated

## 4. **REORGANISATION AND COMMAND**

### 4.1 Character of Generals

At the start of the game, determine the character of each general. Roll 1D10 for each general and consult the following table:

	Cautious	Average	Bold	Inspired
USA	0,1,2,3	4,5,6	7,8	9
CSA	0,1,2	3,4,5	6,7	8,9
Cmd Modifier	-1	0	+1	+2

The character of a general can be indicated by a marker placed alongside or on the general's base.

### 4.2 Removal of a Command Fail Marker

To remove a Command Fail marker requires a general to be with the unit. Roll **1D10** + the general's Command Modifier. On a score of **5+** the marker is removed.

A unit thus reorganised by a general cannot advance towards the enemy but may fire or retreat. A general can only reorganise units that are in his chain of command, so for example, a corps commander can only reorganise divisions belonging to his own corps.

### 4.3 Reorganisation

A unit with a disorganised marker may attempt to remove it.

Roll **2D6**, -2 if unit has taken casualties, +1 Veteran, -1 Raw, +1 Cautious/Average Gen, +2

Bold/Inspired Gen.

3 or less	Rout
4 or 5	Withdraw 2
6 or 7	Withdraw 1
8, 9, 10	Stand
11	Advance
12 or more	Charge

- Rout - Unit dissolves in rout and is removed from the table.
- Withdraw 2 - Unit retreats **2 hexes**.
- Withdraw 1 - Unit retreats **1 hex**.
- Stand - Unit does nothing this turn. It cannot move or fire.
- Advance - Unit moves 1 hex straight ahead, unless adjacent to an enemy unit.
- Charge - Close to contact with nearest enemy unit regardless of distance. No Close to Contact test required, unit counts +1 in any ensuing melee.

A unit which withdraws or otherwise moves across a table edge is lost for the rest of the game. Units in works, built up areas or woods ignore results above which involve forward movement, but are still successfully reorganised.

## 5. MOVEMENT

### 5.1 Formations

The following formations are permitted:

- Fighting Line - Bases in one or two ranks.
- March Column - One base wide. Units must be in this formation in order to use road movement..
- Encamped - Bases scattered irregularly in the hex.

### 5.2 General Movement

- All arms move **1 hex** & fire or **2 hexes** without firing, roads **+1 hex**. May change facing.
- Artillery cannot move and fire (except to change facing).
- A unit consisting solely of cavalry may move an additional hex.
- Generals move up to **3 hexes**.
- Changing formation takes 1 turn and the unit may fire.
- A unit that doesn't move may flip its card, thus reserving its action.

### 5.3 Closing to Contact (Charging)

A unit wishing to close with the enemy declares that it is doing so. Roll **1D10**:

+2	Inspired general with unit	-1	Disorganised
+2	Attacking enemy in flank or encamped	-1	Cautious general with unit
+1	Bold general with unit	-1	Veteran attacking enemy
+1	Raw		in works
		-2	Cavalry only

- 5 or more** the unit charges; the unit being charged must test to stand.
- 4 or less** the unit cannot move closer to the enemy. The unit may fire.

### 5.4 Withstanding a Charge

When a unit is charged as described above, it must test to see if it successfully stands and fights. Roll **1D10**:

+2	In works (except in flank)	-1	Cautious general with unit
+2	Inspired general with unit	-1	Veteran
+1	In woods or a sunken road	-1	Outnumbered 2:1
+1	Bold general with unit	-2	Cavalry
+1	Raw	-2	Disorganised
		-2	In column
		-2	Being attacked in flank or encamped

<b>7 or more</b>	the unit stands and a melee is fought in the melee phase.
<b>4, 5 or 6</b>	the unit withdraws <b>1 hex</b> . Gain Command Fail.
<b>1, 2 or 3</b>	the unit withdraws <b>2 hexes</b> . Gain Command Fail
<b>0 or less</b>	the unit routs and is removed from play.

When a unit withdraws the attacker may advance into the vacated hex.  
 Unsupported artillery automatically withdraw **1 hex** and gain Command Fail.

The combined effect of the above will be that melee is relatively rare. Usually a unit will charge the enemy who immediately withdraw. Then they will counter attack. This kind of toing and froing was typical of the period.

## 6. FIRING

### 6.1 Terrain Effects

A unit must have a clear line of sight to an enemy unit in order to fire on it. Hills and any troop bases block the line of sight and thus cannot be fired over or through. The range of all weapons in woods and built up areas is reduced to **1 hex**, unless firing out from the edge. A unit cannot fire out of a wood or built up area unless it is at the edge.

### 6.2 Small Arms Fire

All the bases in a unit may fire. Range **1 hex**

Roll **1D10** for each group of 3 bases or less:

TARGET	FIRING UNIT
-3 In works	-2 Disorganised
-2 In sunken road	-2 For each base less than 3
-1 In woods	-1 Raw
+1 In column	+1 Veteran
+1 Disorganised	
+2 Enfiladed or encamped	

3 or less	No effect.
4 to 6	The targeted division is Disorganised.
7 or more	The targeted division is Disorganised, if already Disorganised, lose 1 base. The owner of the unit may choose which base to remove.

### 6.3 Artillery Fire

Smooth bore artillery was by far the most devastating at ranges of 300 yards or less when firing canister or double canister. A 12 pound Napoleon was far more effective than a 3" Rifled piece which fired fewer projectiles and the gun barrel rifling produced a smaller kill zone. At ranges of up to 800 yards a smooth bore was usually as effective as a rifled piece. Rifled artillery usually gained their advantage over a smooth bore with an effective range up to 2000 yards. The rifled projectiles were more effective at long range.

Roll **1D10** for each base:

TARGET		FIRING UNIT	
-3	Only artillery	-1	Disorganised
-2	In works or sunken road	-1	Raw
-1	In woods	+1	Veteran
+1	Disorganised		
+2	In column		
+3	Enfiladed or encamped		

Rifled Guns:

1 hex	2 hexes	3 hexes	
2 or less	1 or less	4 or less	No effect
3 to 5	2 to 7	5 to 7	Target division Disorganised
6 or more	8 or more	8 or more	Target division Disorganised, if already Disorganised, lose 1 base

Smooth bore Guns

1 hex	2 hexes	3 hexes	
less than 0	1 or less	6 or less	No effect
0 to 4	2 to 7	7 or 8	Target division Disorganised
5 or more	8 or more	9 or more	Target division Disorganised, if already Disorganised, lose 1 base

Where a base is lost, the owner of the unit may choose which base to remove.

## 7. MELEE

A melee occurs when a unit successfully stands against a charge.

Roll **1D6** for each base:

+1	Charging	-1	Overlapped
+2	Defending in works or sunken road	+1	Defending and uphill
+2	Flank or Rear attack	+1	Defending in woods or fence line
-1	Disorganised or encamped		

Modified scores cannot become more than 6 or less than 1.

**score 6**, opposing base lost and the unit is disorganised (if it is not disorganised already).

The side that lost more bases retreats 1 hex and gains a Command Fail marker.

The other side reforms on their new position.

If losses are equal, they both reform on their original position and gain a Command Fail marker.

## 8. OPTIONAL RULES

### 8.1 Artillery Hits on Built Up Areas

When a base is lost by artillery fire on a unit in a built up area, roll **1D10** to see if the buildings catch fire. They do so on a roll of **4 or less**. Troops must evacuate built up areas on fire as soon as possible and may not re-enter until the fire is extinguished. To extinguish a fire, roll **1D10** each turn to score **6 or more**. An unextinguished fire spreads downwind (determine wind direction randomly when required) one block on a roll of **4 or more** on a D10.

### 8.2 Risk to Generals

If a general is attached to a unit which is disorganised by artillery or small arms fire. Roll **1D10**, on a **0** score the general is removed as a casualty.

In the turn following the loss of a corps commander, roll for the character of the next ranking officer who thus takes over the command. Replace the general's marker on the table with the appropriate character marker. In the turn following the loss of an army commander, then the next ranking general takes over.

### 8.3 **Restoring Lost Bases**

A unit that is not involved in melee, is not fired upon and cannot be seen by any enemy base (see Terrain Effects below) is considered to be "in reserve" and may attempt to restore lost bases. This represents stragglers and such like returning to the colours when the apparent danger is past. Roll **1D10** and consult the table:

1st turn in reserve	8+ restores 1 base	-1	Raw
2nd turn	6+	+1	Veteran
3rd turn and after	4+		

A unit cannot regain more bases than it has actually lost.

## 9. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & BIBLIOGRAPHY**

In keeping with the principle that there is nothing new under the sun, these rules owe much of their inspiration to others that have gone before. In particular, "On to Richmond", a set of rules for the American Civil War that were published several years ago in "The Courier" magazine and the "Red Square" games series from Wargames Developments.

An excellent source book on the period is "Battle in the Civil War" by Paddy Griffith (Field Books, 1986). The four volume "Battles and Leaders" (ed. Johnson and Buell, Century Co., New York, 1884, many reprints) is widely regarded as the definitive account of the war, particularly since much of it was written by eye-witnesses.

For further information on organisation and equipment, have a look at "Unit Organizations of the American Civil War" by Richard J. Zimmerman (Rafm Co. Inc., 1982). This book was published in Canada, so may be difficult to obtain.