

H.G. WELLS'
LITTLE WARS



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Introduction

People have played with toy soldiers ever since toy soldiers became a Thing, but it took Mr. H.G. Wells to systematize the game and write down rules for play. He seems to have been an avid player himself, and his book Little Wars contains battle reports, dramatically cataloguing some of his engagements.

I am an enthusiastic wargamer myself, and I love Little Wars. It is easy to play, and also there are LIVE CANNON (in this case, Playmobil) that you actually fire at your opponent's army. For me, that's a big deal. I mean, with Warhammer and Warmachine and the like, the idea of knocking your minis down is kind of Not On. You've spent hours painting your army. You are not likely to want them to get messed up.

Little Wars is different. In Little Wars, you Do Not Care about messing up your soldiers. You will fire cannon at them, with the goal of knocking them over. This will be Glorious.

A REQUEST

Players! Bring your phones with you! That is, if your phone has a stopwatch feature (as I believe most phones do). We will need stopwatches!!!!

Two Player or Mega-Battle?

We intend to be flexible on that point. We'd like to do a Mega-Battle, with four players per side, because we feel that that will be Glorious. However, if the numbers do not work out, or if players wish to play two-player battles, we are willing to run two-player encounters instead. That will also be lots of fun.

PRE-GAME

Before you start playing, a Win Condition should be decided upon (See Pages 12-13).

Setting Up The Field

- 1) One player arranges the terrain
- 2) The other player selects what side s/he will set up on

Setting Up The Armies

- 1) The players toss a coin for first move
- 2) The player who won the toss sets his/her men up along his/her back line (or table edge). NOTE: the player needn't actually line up his troops in a single line along the table edge. That would look a bit silly. HOWEVER, when it comes to moving the troops, each soldier must be moved as if they were lined up at the table edge (see explanation and diagram, next page).
- 3) The second player sets up his troops along his back line (or table edge)

This phase of the battle is not subject to any time limits. Players may take as long as they like setting up.

A FEW NOTES

TIMING

After set-up, each turn is timed. The timing varies according to the size of the army in question. To determine the time limit for a player's turn:

Every 30 men: +1 minute (rounding up; see example below if that is unclear)

Every gun: +1 minute

Example: Suppose Robinson has 35 men and one gun. He therefore is allowed 3 minutes for his turn, or:

30 men= 1 minute

5 men, rounded up= 1 minute

1 gun= 1 minute

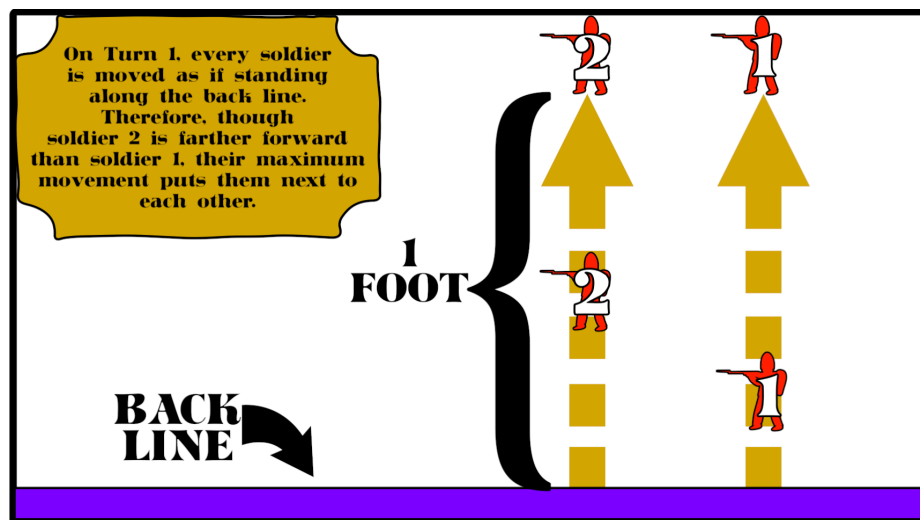
On Robinson's turn, he must stand about a yard away from his back line until the time-keeper calls "TIME!" and begins the stop-watch (we suggest using your smartphone for this, if you possess one; if you do not, we will have something for you to use. We also suggest that players be time-keepers for one another). When the time-keeper calls "TIME!" the player whose turn it is may begin.

THE FIRST TURN

-On the first turn, no guns may be fired. By a "Turn," I mean a complete round.

-On the first turn, movement works differently from the way it will work in subsequent turns. All soldiers are moved as if they are all positioned along the back line, regardless of their actual initial position.

Here is a Helpful Diagram:



MOVEMENT

The players will be provided with two pieces of string. One is a foot long; the other, two feet long. The foot-long string is the distance that an infantry soldier may move; the two-foot long string is the movement

allowed for cavalry. Movement does not have to be in a straight line. This is why you get a string and not a ruler.

THE TURN

Each player's turn has several phases. They happen in the following order:

- 1) Shooting Phase
- 2) Movement Phase
- 3) Melee Phase

The first two phases are TIMED; the third phase is not.

SHOOTING PHASE

Beginning at the start of the second turn, the players may fire their artillery. Each gun may be fired up to 4 times per turn. The guns are fired BEFORE any movement. A gun may only be fired if there are at least 4 men of its own side within 6 inches of it. A gun may not move on a turn in which it has fired.

Any soldier who is knocked over, or who is leaning such that it would fall over if not supported, is killed, and should be removed as a casualty. If the projectile hits a soldier but does not knock any models over, the first soldier hit (but only the first) is removed as a casualty. If several soldiers are hit and none are knocked down, only the first one hit is removed.

As the guns are fired, the opposing player removes his casualties. It is also recommended that s/he remove the projectiles from the field, retaining them for their own use next turn.

MOVEMENT PHASE

The soldiers are moved. Infantrymen move 1 foot; cavalry move 2 feet. Guns may be moved (if they have not been fired) 1 foot if there are 4 infantrymen within 6 inches of it, and 2 feet if there are four cavalry within 6 inches of it. 4 infantrymen or 4 cavalry must move with the gun (start and end movement within 6 inches of the gun).

This is the **end of the timed phase** of the player turn. Melee takes place in an untimed part of the turn.

MELEE PHASE

At the end of the movement phase, if any soldiers are within $1/8^{\text{th}}$ of an inch of an enemy soldier or soldiers (this is defined as being "**in contact**"), there is a melee! The men in contact with enemy soldiers are in the melee, **as are any men within 6 inches of them**.

Resolving Melee

Count how many men on each side are involved in the melee (see above). If the two numbers are **equal**, all combatants on both sides are killed and removed as casualties.

If the two numbers are unequal:

Determine whether the smaller group is **isolated** or **supported**. To do this, look to see how many friendly soldiers (friendly to the smaller group) are within a move of the melee (measuring from points of contact). If the number of friendly soldiers within a move of the melee is less than half of the number of men in the group, the group is considered **isolated**. Otherwise, your group is considered **supported**.

If the smaller group is **isolated**:

- 1) Subtract the number of men in the smaller group from the number of men in the larger group. The resulting number is how many men of the smaller group are taken prisoner.

Example: Cuthbert has 7 men in the melee; Verity has 10. Verity takes 3 of Cuthbert's men prisoner.

- 2) The rest of the men in the smaller group kill and are killed.

Example: Cuthbert's remaining 4 men kill 4 of Verity's men, and are killed themselves. Verity therefore has 6 men left, and 3 prisoners; Cuthbert has no men left.

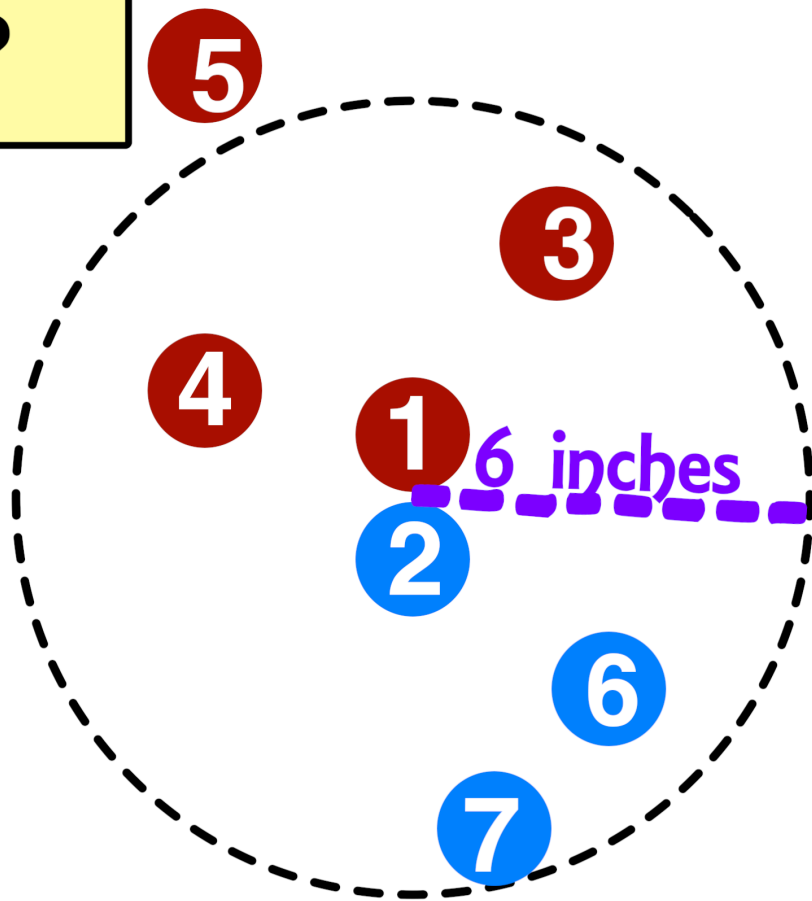
The player who charged (that is, the player who moved this turn) decides who is killed and who is captured.

If the smaller group is **supported**:

Each man in the smaller group kills a man in the larger group and is himself killed.

You will find several Helpful Diagrams about melee combat on the following pages.

Who is in the MELEE?



Here, soldier 1 is within 1/8 in. of opposing soldier 2; they are therefore in combat.

Now, measure 6 inches from the midpoint of the conflict to see who else is going to fight.

On the red side, soldiers 3 and 4 are within 6 inches. They are therefore in the combat.

On the blue side, soldiers 6 and 7 are within 6 inches. They are therefore in the combat.

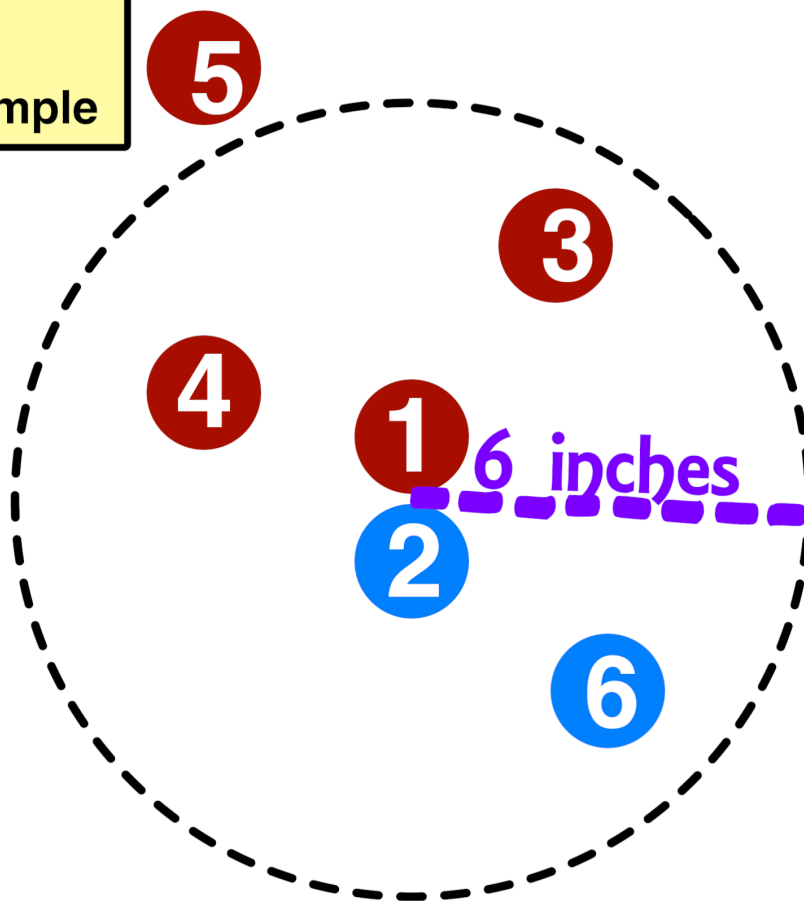
Soldier 5 is not in the combat, because he is more than 6 inches away.

Since there are 3 red soldiers and 3 blue soldiers in the melee, this is an EQUAL melee, and soldiers 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 are all removed from the board as casualties, while 5 quietly has a nervous breakdown.*

*but remains active and on the board;
“quietly has a nervous breakdown” isn’t
a thing with any in-game significance.

Who is in the MELEE?

Unequal Combat Example



Here, soldier 1 is within 1/8 in. of opposing soldier 2; they are therefore in combat.

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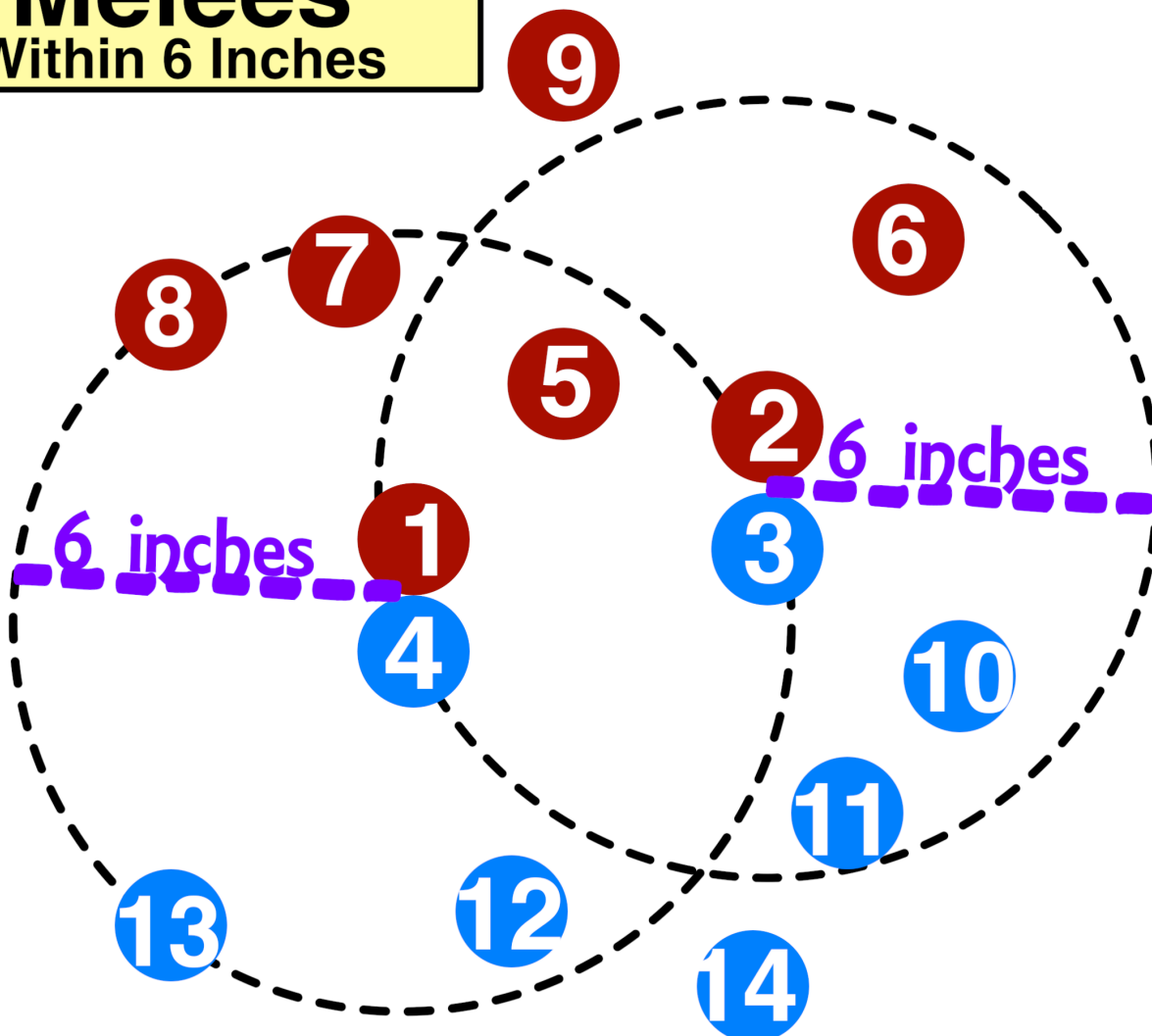
Soldier 5 is not in the combat, because he is more than 6 inches away.

Since red has 3 soldiers in the melee, and blue has only two, this is an UNEQUAL combat.

When you have an UNEQUAL combat, first determine whether the smaller group (blue, in this case) is SUPPORTED or ISOLATED.

Multiple Melees

Within 6 Inches



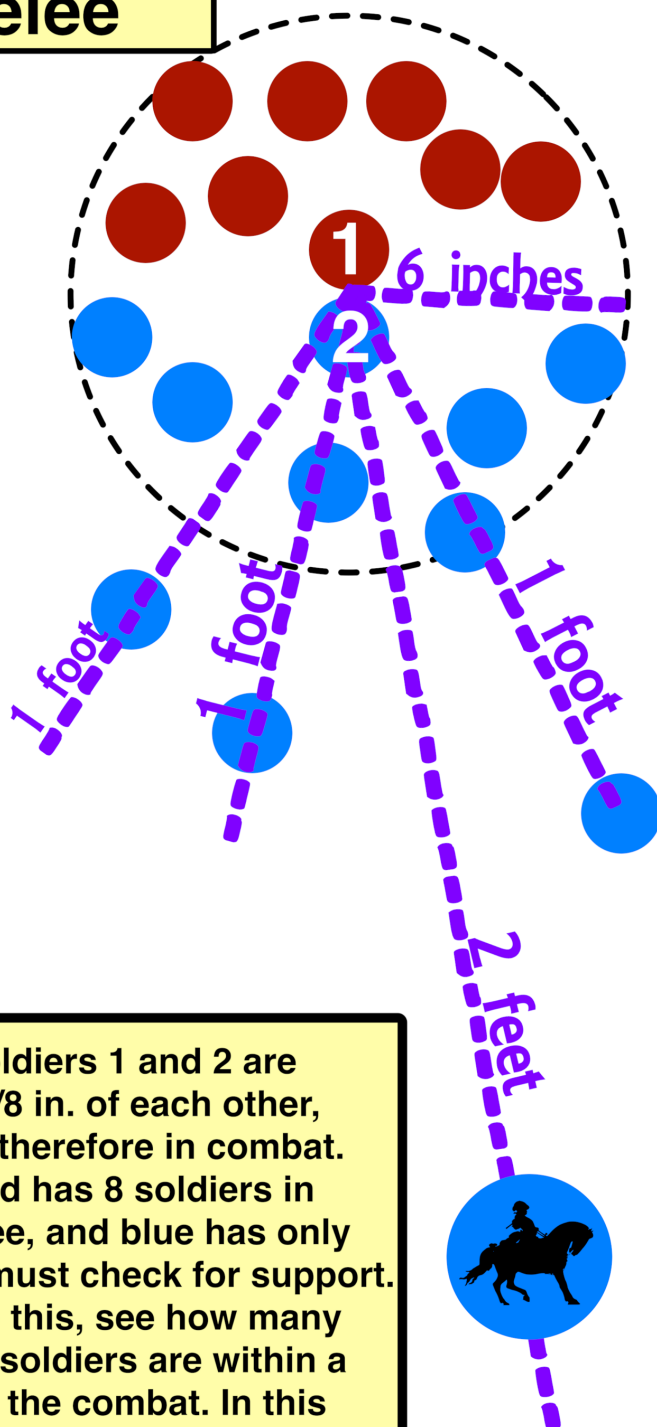
In the above diagram, soldier 1 is within 1/8 in. of opposing soldier 4; they are therefore in combat. To complicate matters, soldier 2 is with 1/8 in. of opposing soldier 3; they are therefore in combat. The two combats are within 6 inches of each other, so we will assess the resulting melee as if it is all one big happy combat.

On the red side, soldiers 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are in the combat; soldier 9 is not.

On the blue side, soldiers 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, and 13 are in the combat; soldier 14 is not.

Since each side has 6 soldiers in the combat, this is an **EQUAL** Melee. Grimly, all soldiers in the combat are immediately removed from the board as casualties.

Supported Melee



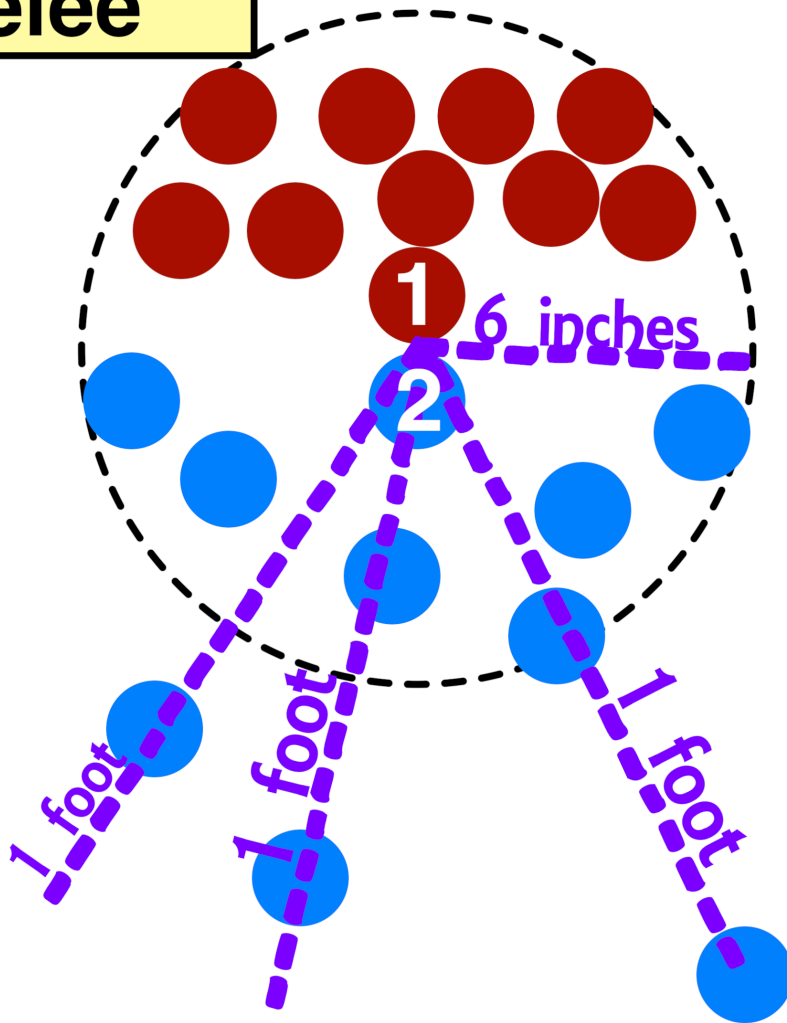
Here, soldiers 1 and 2 are within $\frac{1}{8}$ in. of each other, and are therefore in combat. Since red has 8 soldiers in the melee, and blue has only 7, blue must check for support.

To do this, see how many friendly soldiers are within a move of the combat. In this case, blue has three friendly infantry within a foot of the melee—not enough!— but blue also has a cavalryman within 2 feet of the melee. 4 is more than half of 7, and therefore blue is supported.

The Result:

All 7 blue soldiers in the melee are removed as casualties.
7 of the 8 red soldiers in the melee are removed as casualties.

Isolated Melee



Here, soldiers 1 and 2 are within $\frac{1}{8}$ in. of each other, and are therefore in combat. Since red has 10 soldiers in the melee, and blue has only 7, blue must check for support.

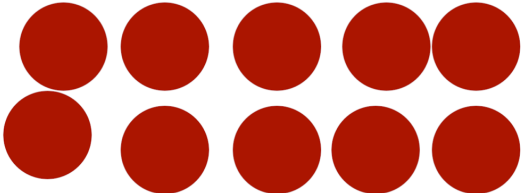
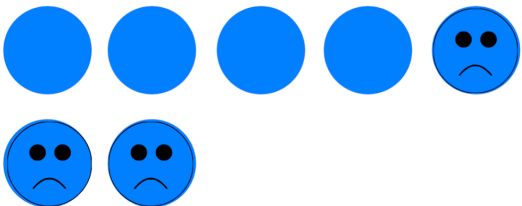
To do this, see how many friendly soldiers are within a move of the combat. In this case, blue has three friendly infantry within a foot of the melee. To be supported, blue needs at least 4 friendly soldiers to be within a move of the melee (because there are 7 blue soldiers in the combat, and to be supported you need half of that number-3.5, rounded up to 4- to be a move away).

Blue is therefore ISOLATED.

What will become of
Blue? And of Red?
Tune in Next Diagram
for the EXCITING
SOLUTION!

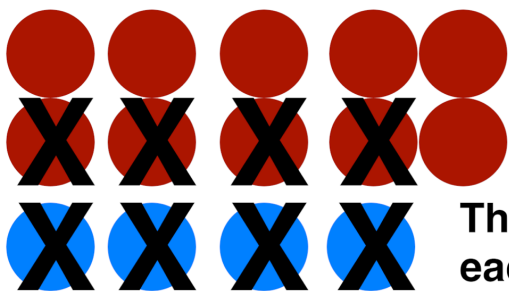
Isolated Unequal Combat Resolution

Step 1


$$= 10 -$$

$$= 7$$
$$\underline{\hspace{1cm}}$$
$$3$$

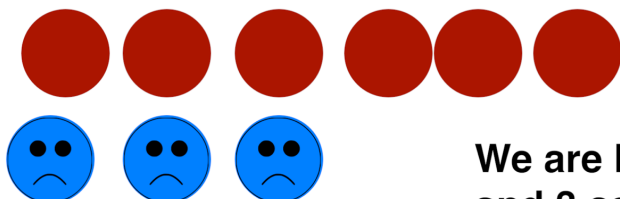
Red has 10 soldiers, blue has 7. 10 minus 7 is 3.
Three blue soldiers are taken prisoner.

Step 2



The remaining 4 blue soldiers
each kill one red soldier and are
themselves killed.

Step 3



We are left with 6 red soldiers
and 3 sad, blue prisoners.

Prisoners

- Prisoners are considered to be disarmed immediately, and are not able to fight again until and unless they make it to their own friendly back line (starting table edge). If they do this, it is considered that they are re-armed, and they may fight again.
- The movement of prisoners is controlled by the player who has captured them as long as the prisoners have an escort or escorts. If the escort is killed, control of movement of prisoners reverts to the player who originally controlled those men, but the prisoners cannot fight until they reach their own back line.
- One soldier can escort up to 7 prisoners. To escort prisoners, the soldier must stay within 6 inches of them.
- Once prisoners are taken back to the enemy back line, they are removed from the game. At this point, their escort may leave them and go back to the fighting.
- Prisoners are never considered combatants in melee. They do not count as support for a melee either.
- If a group of men is isolated, they may surrender at any time, and willingly become prisoners.

Capturing Enemy Guns

To capture an enemy gun, the following conditions must be met:

- 1) The gun must have no friendly soldiers within 6 inches of it
- 2) At least four enemy soldiers must be within 6 inches of it, and must have moved past the gun's wheel axis

Once these conditions are met, control of the gun changes hands, and the gun may be fired by its new controller.

Winning

There are several different possible win conditions. Which sort of game you are playing should be agreed between the players before they begin to play. If no win condition was selected, it is a Fight To The Finish.

One player must always accept the other's concession, though one is permitted to make reassuring noises at the other player, such as, "oh, but Madam! You have not, I think, lost this encounter yet! Will you not assay another turn?" Or "Come, Sir! This is mere defeatism! My position may be stronger, but my victory is by no means assured!" If these noises do not work, however, concession must be accepted.

If at any point the game must end with no clear victor, or if a scenario calls for any calculation of victory points, use the point values below.

You Score:

100 points for a victory (NOTE: this point value is not always relevant; it is to be assigned in the Blow at the Rear scenario)

10 Points for every gun; your own and captured guns both count

1 ½ points for every friendly cavalryman still in action (not dead or taken prisoner)

1 point for every friendly infantryman still in action

½ point for every man of yours who is a prisoner in the hands of the enemy

½ point for every prisoner you have taken

Win Conditions/Scenarios

Fight To The Finish

It is a fight to the death. When every one of your hated enemy is driven off the field, killed, or captured, you win.

Blow at the Rear

Victory here is determined when at least three soldiers reach the enemy back line. If the defeated player chooses, he may then try to withdraw over his own back line. After six turns, anything left on the field is considered to be captured by the victor, and points are calculated according to the values on the previous page.

The Defensive Game

Here, the defending force must be only two thirds as strong as the attacking force. The defending force must prevent the attacking force from reaching the defending back line. The attacking force must try to reach the enemy back line, and must reach this line with at least $1/4^{\text{th}}$ of its original strength.

Set Up for this scenario is a little different from the usual. The Country is set up as usual by one or both players before it is known who is the defender. Toss a coin; the winner is the defender. The defender sets up first. The **defender** may set up anywhere on her side of the table that is farther than one move from the center line. The **attacker** then sets up, and may place his troops anywhere within one move of his back line.

One further difference here is that, while the attacker must wait for his second turn to fire guns, the defender may fire her guns on her first turn.

Army Composition

If you are making up your own forces, use the point system listed in Winning to create balanced armies.

MEGA-BATTLE MODIFICATIONS

These rules are subject to further modification, but here's how we see this working:

One team sets up the terrain

The other team decides which table edge they want for deployment

All players on the same side will set up at the same time and along the same table edge.

All players on the same side will have their turn simultaneously and within the same time limit. This will be mildly chaotic, but the chaos of the battlefield is an aspect of war that H.G. Wells was trying to build into his rules system, so chaos is good.

Players should not capture cannon from other players on their own side, but, if a player's army is eliminated, friendly forces as well as hostile forces may take control of the cannon in the way described above.